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Majorities of Clinton, Trump Supporters Favor Nuclear Energy, New Survey Finds

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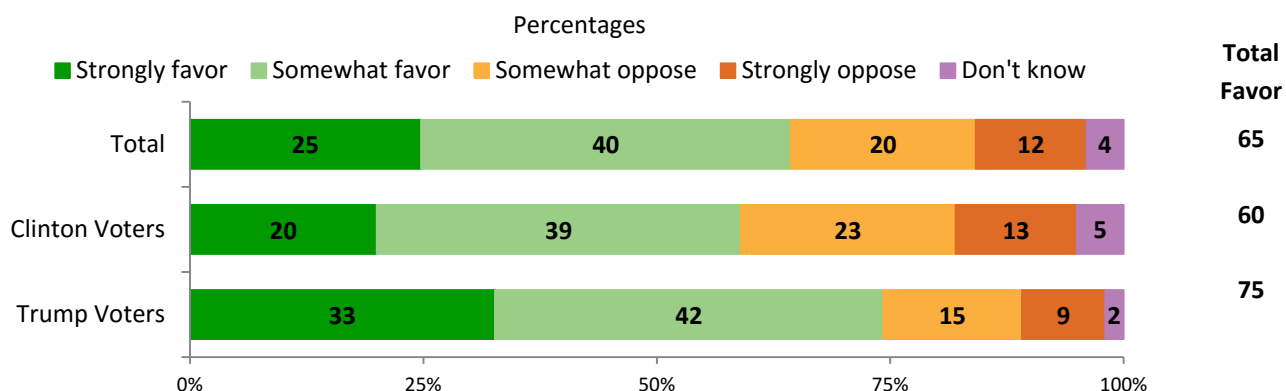
Despite this year's notorious political divide, Clinton and Trump supporters have something in common: Majorities of both groups of voters favor nuclear energy, according to a national survey conducted this fall. Overall, 65 percent of the U.S. public favors nuclear energy, including 60 percent of Clinton supporters and 75 percent of Trump supporters.

The survey was conducted from Sept. 21 to Oct. 1, 2016, with a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Bisconti Research, Inc., conducted the survey with Quest Global Research. The survey continues the Nuclear Energy Institute's 33-year public opinion tracking program, which provides analysis of long-term trends.¹

The survey found 40 percent of the respondents plan to vote for Hillary Clinton, 34 percent for Donald Trump and 14 percent for someone else. Twelve percent said they are voting for no one for President.

Favorability to the Use of Nuclear Energy: Clinton and Trump Voters

"Overall, do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States?"



Clinton and Trump Voters Agree on Nuclear Energy

Among the public at large, 65 percent favor nuclear energy and 32 percent oppose, with 25 strongly in favor, 40 percent somewhat in favor, 20 percent somewhat opposed, 12 percent strongly opposed,

¹ The NEI survey methodology has evolved: landline only 1983 through 2013; landline and cell phone 2014 and 2015; and landline, cellphone, and online panel respondents in 2016. See favorability trend graph on page 5.

<http://www.nei.org/Master-Document-Folder/Backgrounders/Reports-And-Studies/Questionnaire-for-Public-Opinion-Survey,-Fall-2016>

and four percent unable to answer. Majorities of both Clinton and Trump voters favor nuclear energy, although Trump voters are more favorable:

- 60 percent of Clinton voters said they favor “the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States,” and 36 percent are opposed.
- 75 percent of Trump voters said they favor “the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States,” and 23 percent are opposed.

Clinton and Trump voters hold similar opinions on license renewal and new nuclear power plants:

- Most support license renewal of nuclear power plants that continue to meet federal safety standards—including 80 percent of the general public, 78 percent of Clinton voters and 85 percent of Trump voters.
- Large majorities also support preparing now so that new nuclear power plants could be built if needed in the next decade—including 71 percent of the general public, 68 percent of Clinton voters, and 77 percent of Trump voters.
- Clinton voters are more divided on building more nuclear power plants—55 percent of the general public, 49 percent of Clinton voters, and 65 percent of Trump voters believe we definitely should do so.

Those surveyed hold similar views on one aspect of trade: 73 percent of the public, 72 percent of Clinton voters, and 80 percent of Trump voters believe that “as countries around the world build new nuclear power plants, it is important for the U.S. nuclear industry to continue to play a leading role in world markets.”

Clinton and Trump Voters See Nuclear Energy as Important for the Future, with Mixed Views on Safety

Both Clinton and Trump voters, like the public at large, see nuclear energy as important for the future but have mixed views about the safety of the technology.

- Seventy-five percent of the general public, 76 percent of Clinton voters, and 80 percent of Trump voters believe that nuclear energy will be important in meeting the nation’s electricity needs in the years ahead.
- Forty-five percent of the public, 45 percent of Clinton voters, and 50 percent of Trump voters believe that nuclear energy’s importance will increase in the years ahead. Fewer believe nuclear energy’s importance will decrease—17 percent of the public, 22 percent of Clinton voters, and 11 percent of Trump voters.
- On a 7-point scale rating the safety of nuclear power plants, 57 percent of the public gave a high rating versus 23 percent who gave a low rating; the numbers for Clinton voters were 51 percent versus 27 percent and for Trump voters 69 percent versus 15 percent.
- Sixty-eight percent of the public, 67 percent of Clinton voters, and 78 percent of Trump voters agree that nuclear power plants operating in the United States are safe and secure.

More Clinton than Trump Voters Give Priority to Environmental Considerations

Survey respondents rated the importance of nine possible considerations for the way electricity is produced. They were asked to rate the importance that they personally attribute to each consideration. Reliability, clean air, and affordable electricity were rated highest. Climate change solution was rated lowest.

Clinton voters assigned environmental considerations a higher priority than Trump voters.

- Clean air—82 percent of Clinton voters compared with 60 percent of Trump voters said clean air is a top consideration.
- Climate change solution—63 percent of Clinton voters, compared with 25 percent of Trump voters, said producing electricity in a way that helps solve climate change is a top consideration.

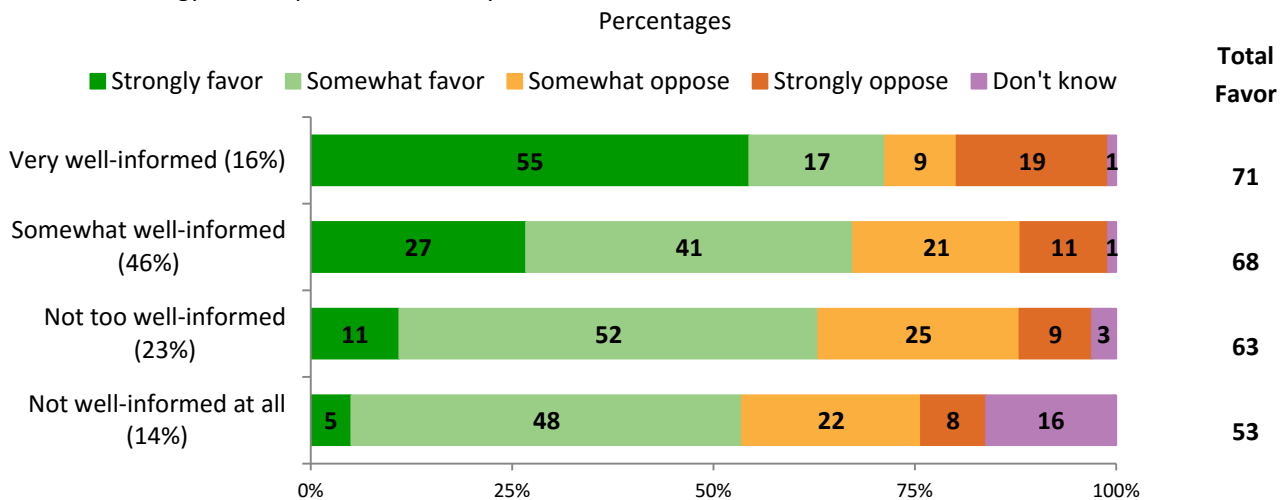
More Informed, More Favorable

A small minority of the U.S. public feels very well-informed about nuclear energy. In this survey, 16 percent feel very well-informed, 46 percent somewhat well-informed, 23 percent feel not too well-informed, and 14 percent feel not well-informed at all. Only 19 percent of Clinton voters and 17 percent of Trump voters feel very well-informed about nuclear energy.

Favorability to nuclear energy is closely correlated with the degree to which people feel informed about the topic. The more informed people feel, the more they favor nuclear energy.

Favorability to Nuclear Energy, by Level of Feeling Informed about Nuclear Energy

“Do you feel very well-informed, somewhat well-informed, not too well-informed, or not well-informed at all about nuclear energy used to produce electricity?”



Among those who feel very well-informed about nuclear energy, nearly three times as many strongly favor nuclear energy (55 percent) as strongly oppose (19 percent). That imbalance is significant, because people who feel very well-informed on an issue usually hold their view more firmly and express them with greater confidence.

The degree of feeling informed is also associated closely with perceived benefits of nuclear energy. For example:

- Percent associate nuclear energy a lot with clean air: 58 percent of those who feel very well-informed, 52 percent of those who feel somewhat well-informed, 38 percent of those who feel not too well-informed, and 24 percent of those who don't feel at all well-informed about nuclear energy.
- Percent associate nuclear energy a lot with climate change solution: 47 percent of those who feel very well-informed, 37 percent of those who feel somewhat well-informed, 26 percent of those who feel not too well-informed, and 24 percent of those who don't feel at all well-informed about nuclear energy.

In addition, those who have heard or read about these benefits over the past year are more likely to link those benefits with nuclear energy. For example, 60 percent of those who heard or read something about nuclear energy's clean air benefits over the past year associate nuclear energy a lot with clean air, compared with just 31 percent of those who had not heard this information.

Knowing Nuclear Energy's Distinct Role Changes Attitudes

The survey found continued 95-percent consensus that it's important to maintain a diversity of energy sources. Most, 82 percent, agree that "we should take advantage of all zero-carbon energy sources, including nuclear, hydro and renewable energy, to produce the electricity we need while limiting greenhouse gas emissions"; 47 percent strongly agree, compared with only five percent who strongly disagree.

However, previous NEI surveys revealed that many Americans are unaware of nuclear energy's role in the zero-carbon electricity mix: Of the two leading considerations for electricity production the public values most – reliable electricity and clean air – nuclear energy provides them both, and in large quantities.

To understand the effect of new information about this distinct role, the 2016 survey asked (after measuring basic attitudes):

*Nuclear energy produces 62% of zero-carbon electricity in the United States. And given that nuclear energy is the only electricity source that provides **both** clean air **and** continuous 24-7 electricity, do you think nuclear energy should be very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all in the future?*

The impact of this information about nuclear energy's leading role in a zero-carbon electricity mix is striking: 84 percent said that nuclear energy should be important in the future, including 63 percent of those who initially opposed nuclear energy and 39 percent who initially strongly opposed nuclear energy.

After hearing this information, 81 percent of Clinton voters, and 87 percent of Trump voters answered that nuclear energy should be important in the future.

Observations

A meeting of the minds on any topic during this election season is a rarity. The level of agreement between Clinton and Trump voters on nuclear energy is, therefore, worth noting. The survey continues to find limited public awareness about nuclear energy and powerful impact of learning about nuclear energy's distinct role for offering the two most valued considerations in electricity production, reliable electricity and clean air.

Trend 1983-2016: Annual Averages Until 2016 Percent Who Favor and Oppose Nuclear Energy

"Overall, do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the use of nuclear energy as one of the ways to provide electricity in the United States?"

