

NATO Public Opinion on Nuclear Weapons

January 2021

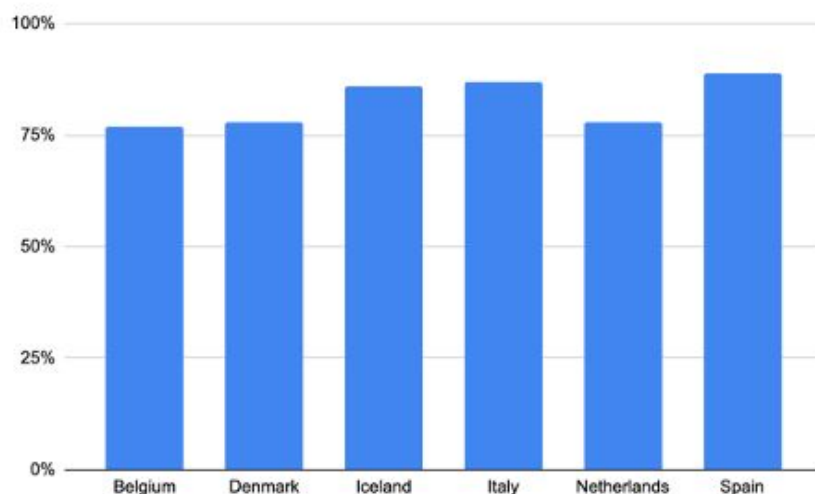
Introduction

New surveys reveal large segments of the population in six NATO states favor the alliance taking a drastically new course when it comes to nuclear weapons. They overwhelmingly support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and reject the station of nuclear weapons on their soil. Despite NATO's official opposition to the [2017 TPNW](#), the new findings track with [several recent](#) public opinion polls show that public support stands firmly behind the ban and citizens no longer want their countries to participate in NATO's nuclear sharing program. The polls, conducted in 2020 in Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, show that support for the TPNW and removing nuclear weapons is growing and that these states should choose to be among the first NATO states to join the treaty. The treaty [takes full effect](#) on 22 January 2021 and within one year the countries that have joined the treaty will meet to discuss its full implementation. There is [no legal barrier](#) for NATO states to join, on the contrary, there are many advantages for them to do so. Now is the time for NATO states to implement its democratic values and follow public opinion to join the treaty.

Key Findings

NATO public stand behind the ban

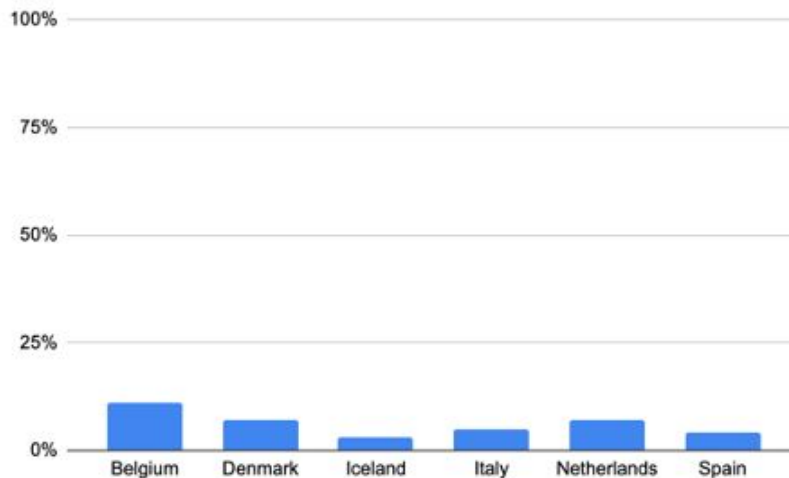
Support for NATO countries to join the TPNW remains high with 89% of Spanish, 87% of Italians, 86% of Icelanders, 78% of Dutch and Danish and 77% of Belgians supporting their country joining the treaty.



Percentage of respondents who answered "yes" to the question: "Do you think your country should join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?"

Public support for official state position is extremely low

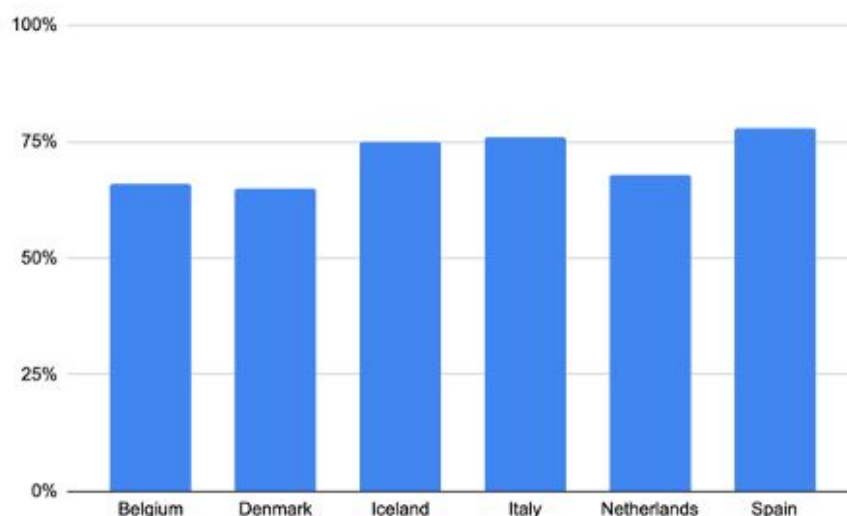
What's more, actual support for the official government policy to not join the TPNW is often in the single digits. A mere 3% of Icelanders, 4% of Spanish, 5% of Italians, 7% of Dutch and Danish think their country should not join the treaty. In Belgium only 11% of the population support the government decision not to join the treaty.



Percentage of respondents who answered "no" to the question "Do you think your country should join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?"

The public supports joining the TPNW before other NATO states

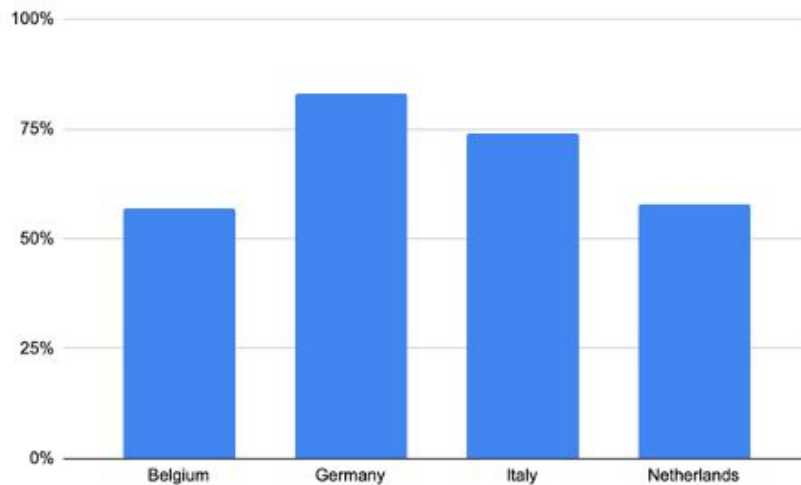
NATO countries may be concerned about political repercussions of joining the treaty given the position of NATO HQ and the United States, but the public still believes that their country should stand for what is right, and lead on nuclear disarmament rather than follow.. 78% of Spanish, 76% of Italians, 75% of Icelanders, 68% of Dutch, 66% of Belgian and 65% of Danish support their country being among the first NATO states to join the TPNW.



Percentage of respondents who answered "yes" to the question. "Do you think your country should be among the first members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, even if it might come under pressure from the United States of America not to do so?"

Host countries want nuclear weapons out

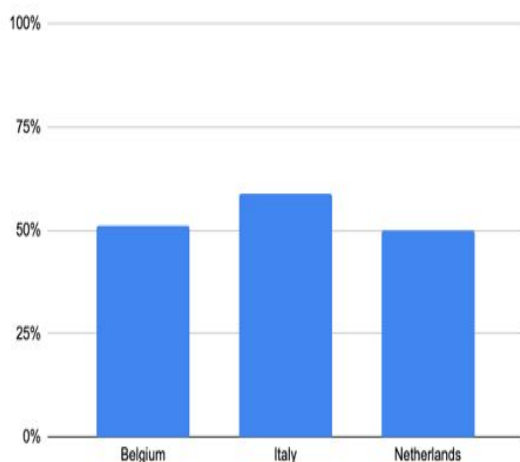
Majorities in European host countries want U.S. nuclear weapons removed from their soil – 74% of Italians, 58% of Dutch and 57% of Belgians and 83% of Germans. The data for German public opinion comes from an earlier July 2020 study, as noted in the methodology.



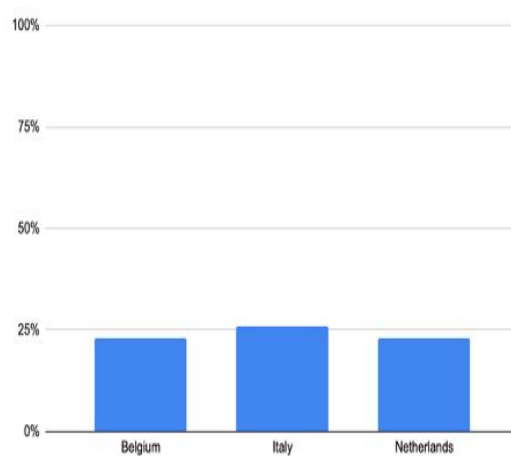
Percentage of respondents in Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands who answered “yes” to the question: “There are nuclear weapons that are currently stationed in your country. Do you think US nuclear weapons should be removed from your country's territory or should they stay?”

Host countries don't want nuclear-capable fighter jets

Likewise, majorities don't want their country to purchase nuclear-capable fighter jets, but more education would be useful for the significant percentages that responded that they didn't know.



Respondents who answered “I think the new fighter jets should not be equipped with the capacity to carry nuclear weapons” about combat aircraft capable of dropping nuclear weapons.



Respondents who answered “I don't know” about combat aircraft capable of dropping nuclear weapons.

Conclusion

The preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty [states](#) that parties “are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.” In several NATO countries the majority of the population supports joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and removing U.S. nuclear weapons from their territory. Dozens of former heads of state, foreign and defense ministers from NATO countries, as well as two former NATO secretaries-general [have called on](#) their governments to join. It is time for these countries to live up to their democratic ideals and follow the will of the people to join the TPNW.

Methodology

With the exception of the German poll on hosting nuclear weapons, all surveys were conducted by YouGov Deutschland GmbH on behalf of ICAN in late November 2020 and roughly 1000 people participated in each country. The results of the YouGov polls have been weighted and are representative for the respective population over the age of 18.

Germany:

The data used is based on an [online survey](#) conducted by the opinion research institute Kantar in July 2020 on behalf of Greenpeace in which 1008 people participated in Germany. German respondents answered “komplett aus Deutschland abgezogen werden” when prompted with “In Deutschland sind Atombomben der USA stationiert. Sollten diese ...?”

Belgium:

The data used is based on an online survey in which 1004 persons participated between 23.11.2020 and 27.11.2020 in Belgium.

Denmark:

The data used is based on an online survey in which 1008 persons participated between 19.11.2020 and 30.11.2020 in Denmark.

Iceland:

The data used is based on an online survey in which 751 persons participated between 27.11.2020 and 09.12.2020 in Iceland.

Italy:

The data used is based on an online survey in which 1029 persons participated between 19.11.2020 and 20.11.2020 in Italy.

Netherlands:

The data used is based on an online survey in which 1003 persons participated between 23.11.2020 and 26.11.2020 in the Netherlands.

Spain:

The data used is based on an online survey in which 1096 persons participated between 19.11.2020 and 23.11.2020 in Spain.