



A photo of the prayer site of the 2024 Trinity Remembrance Gathering in New Mexico. The altar, with its rock tabernacle, looks out at Ground Zero of the Trinity Nuclear Test which took place on July 16, 1945. Photo by Tommy Byrne

NUCLEAR WEAPONS SURVEY 2025

*Offered by PCAN
(Pax Christi New England Campaign
to Abolish Nuclear Weapons)*

July 26, 2025



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Dedication

This report is dedicated to the memory and legacy of Pope Francis, who condemned the use and even the possession of nuclear weapons as "immoral," under whose leadership the Vatican signed the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons when it opened for signature on 20 September 2017 and was the first state to ratify the Treaty, and who never lost faith that "a world free of nuclear weapons is both possible and necessary."

https://www.icanw.org/holy_see

Prologue

We approach a fateful day. It is a day seared in history, yet because of its nature, it transcends time, creating a new reality, one where that day past could become our doomsday future.

On August 6, 2025, we will give witness to the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. That day began a new age, the Atomic Age, where the secret center of the universe was used to incinerate a people. The atom, like the biblical Adam, was co-opted and corrupted. The atom became a murderous weapon. Its white light still flames, still burns, still kills. We must see its true nature, its malignant reality, its apocalyptic potential. It is both a weapon and a warning.

The word catholic, according to one secular definition, means “all-embracing.” We seek to embrace all people in a campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. It is a lofty goal, and an essential one. Time is not on our side. Nuclear weapons are all-embracing, too. They will, if we do not act, embrace us all in a thousand Hiroshimas.

From our work, we know well the dangers of nuclear war, the cataclysms that would follow such an exchange. Even a limited exchange. No one wants a world of corpses. But what of those who are unaware of the dangers? Who believe that nuclear war is not a threat? What of those who are unsure of what to do or those who use their gifts in other ways?

We listen to them, and we ask to be listened to. We seek to eliminate nuclear weapons in order to save lives. Millions of lives—and God’s whole Creation. Nuclear weapons strike at the heart of our faith. They are the ultimate indignity to life. We know that by possessing and threatening to use them, we are corroding our soul.

Philip Berrigan wrote that we build our intentions into our nuclear weapons, our intentions to murder millions of people. You cannot pay for and build a doomsday device without having the intention to use it. Is this truly what we carry in our hearts?

It is time to replace the logic of violence in which we are mired with a new logic of nonviolence, opening the space for creative, life-giving alternatives; training us for active love and healing rather than for fear and killing; providing solid ground for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Pope Francis said, “The consistent practice of nonviolence has broken barriers, bound wounds, healed nations” (letter from Pope Francis to Cardinal Blase Cupich, April 4, 2017). Nowhere is this transformation more desperately needed than in freeing the world from the terrifying threat of nuclear weapons.

Join us in our lofty, essential goal. We seek nothing less than the elimination of nuclear weapons. We seek this because of our love and respect for the individual person. We are

not a mass of humanity, but each of us created unique and distinct. We have life, spirit, and soul. Our faith compels us to protect such gifts. No greater task awaits us than this.

Through our survey, we have sought to encounter each other over this issue. The results are within the pages that follow. Many survey respondents are actively working in a variety of ways for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Others have expressed their concern but report they are not sure what they can do. It is our hope that this report will serve as a resource and call to action for all. And so again, we ask you to join us, to turn back the hands of the Doomsday Clock, to reset those hands so they are raised in joyful surrender.

We urge the Vatican, our bishops and parish priests, our fellow parishioners, and all people, to join in a global effort to make August 6th a day we mourn and remember, a day locked tightly in our past, incapable of exploding in our future. Help us petition our leaders to pass laws that will save humanity from our monstrous weapons. The core of the universe is the atom, holding tight creation. The core of the individual is love, holding tight to each other. Help us to keep it that way.

Thanks to Brad Wolf, editor of [A Ministry of Risk: Writings on Peace and Nonviolence](#), by Philip Berrigan (Fordham, 2024) for his major contribution to this Prologue.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Inspired by the forthright witness of Pope Francis, the leadership of Archbishop John C. Wester, the guidance of IPPNW's Dr. Ira Helfand, the earnest work of ICAN and many other groups, and the long-standing efforts of Pax Christi, we have undertaken a survey of North Americans¹ (United States and Canada) on their knowledge, attitudes, and activities about nuclear weapons, which we consider to be the “most serious existential threat to humankind.”²

Our primary purpose was to discover what we could do to help mobilize North American Catholics to support and work for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Our respondents are not a random sample: they responded at their discretion to invitations from many collaborating organizations (many, but not all are Catholic). About 85% identified as Catholic, of which almost 20% were nuns, priests, or other religious. We purposefully also sought responses from non-Catholics in order to have a comparison sample from outside the Church.

Our Key Findings

- Of our total respondents, over 85% are “greatly” or “very” concerned about nuclear weapons, while slightly over 40% have done work (very broadly defined) to eliminate them. When asked if they'd like to be more involved in efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, only 15% declined, whereas over 40% said yes and the other 40+% were unsure.
- Of those who have not engaged in such work, most cite “powerlessness” and “too busy” as their reason.
- Of those 40+% who have worked to eliminate nuclear weapons, their activities were in political, educational, and spiritual realms roughly equally, with many working in several. Nearly half of them said they were involved in planning such work in the future. Addendum A offers an extensive and inspiring compendium of these activities.
- Of those who have worked for nuclear weapons abolition, the most cited encouragements were Pope Francis' teachings, Archbishop Wester's pastoral letter, materials from Pax Christi, and the work of their companions in the field.
- Surprisingly, Catholics and non-Catholics were about equally aware of Pope Francis' pronouncement that possession of nuclear weapons is immoral: roughly 70% aware, 30% unaware.
- For those who are working for nuclear weapons' abolition, the obstacle most commonly cited (cited by nearly 90%) was public lack of awareness of the threat. However, nuclear weapons' lack of status as a “pro-life” issue was nearly as important (cited by nearly 80%). Lack of coverage in the Catholic press was cited by nearly 60%, while “not hearing about this from my priest or bishop” was cited by over 55%.

1. PCAN has contacted only English speakers in the United States and Canada due to our own limitation to the English language.

2. Archbishop John C. Wester; Address to the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) at the United Nations, December 1, 2023

Our Conclusions

1. There is great concern over the existential threat of nuclear weapons: it is shown by nearly 85% of our respondents.
2. The lack of discussion of the threat of nuclear weapons in public and by religious leaders and press is a key discouragement to action. Nevertheless, nearly half are willing to do more to achieve the global elimination of nuclear weapons.
3. There is significant potential to mobilize this action with effective leadership from Church religious and lay leaders; people have responded very positively to such leadership, for example from Pope Francis, Archbishop Wester, and Pax Christi.

This survey and its report are the work of fallible but devoted humans. If you have questions, find items we can clarify, or have ideas about what to do, we'd like to hear them. Please be in touch with us at pcansurvey@gmail.com.

...man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life.

–John F. Kennedy
Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

PCAN

The Pax Christi New England Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Our group formed in 2023 and produced the January 27, 2024, virtual forum *Building a World Without Nuclear Weapons: An Urgent Imperative*, featuring Dr. Ira Helfand of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN); Marie Dennis of Pax Christi International; and John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, NM, author of the pastoral letter [*Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament*](#). The forum drew more than 900 live participants and the recording has been viewed more than 1,200 times on YouTube.

We are honored that the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development accepted our offer to collect and share North Americans' thoughts, feelings, prayers, actions and hopes surrounding the reality and threat of nuclear weapons. With that encouragement, we offered a survey which was open during March and April of 2025. More than 900 people submitted responses. We quantify and synthesize those responses here.

PCAN hopes that sharing this information can move us closer to the global elimination of such weapons.

PCAN's goals are to:

- amplify Pope Francis' teachings on the abolition of nuclear weapons
- build upon Archbishop John C. Wester's groundbreaking 2022 pastoral letter, [*Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament*](#)
- help advocates to promote these teachings among Catholic hierarchy, laity, and beyond
- call upon the Catholic population to ask their government leaders to take action to abolish nuclear weapons
- work with other Catholic organizations to publicize the dangers of nuclear weapons and our moral obligation to abolish them
- increase momentum to achieve a world without nuclear weapons by 2030

ABOUT OUR SURVEY

The Pax Christi New England Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Survey 2025

Genesis

In April 2024, Dr. Ira Helfand, an international nuclear abolition advocate and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and a member of PCAN, was in Rome to speak to the Italian Senate. Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, NM, arranged a meeting between Dr. Helfand, Cardinal Michael Czerny of the Dicastery on Promoting Integral Human Development, and Dicastery Staff Member Alessio Pecorario, PhD. Cardinal Czerny and Dr. Pecorario said they would welcome messages from Catholics in local parishes around the world and asked us to encourage individuals and parishes to communicate with them about their views on the growing nuclear danger.

Methodology

PCAN drafted its survey with two groups in mind:

1. Those who are concerned about nuclear weapons, are familiar with the various teachings and movements against them, and have spent effort on the problem.
2. The average North American* Catholic in the pew who may or may not be aware of the problem or the Pope's teachings about nuclear weapons.

The survey, conducted during six weeks in March and April of 2025, was offered online using a logic-based survey tool that delivered prescribed questions depending on a respondent's answers to

The Dicastery, in keeping with its emphasis on integral human development, wanted to see if Pope Francis' teaching on nuclear weapons—specifically his moral condemnation not only of the use, or the threat of the use, but also of the mere possession of nuclear weapons—is understood and embraced by Americans. Additionally, they were interested to learn if the awareness of the risks of nuclear weapons was growing.

previous questions. Our primary purpose was to discover what we could do to help mobilize North American Catholics to support and work for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Our respondents are not a random sample: they responded at their discretion to invitations from many collaborating organizations (see distribution outlets below; many, but not all are Catholic) and chose to respond (see respondents distribution map below). About 85% identified as Catholic, of which almost 20% were nuns, priests, or other religious. We purposefully also sought responses from non-Catholics in order to have a comparison sample from outside the Church.

Survey Distribution

The survey invitation went out to many different constituents, including:

- All 66 co-sponsors of our [January 27, 2024 forum](#) (Organizations listed at the bottom of the linked page.)
- All Catholic dioceses in the U.S. and Canada
- All members of Pax Christi USA
- The Catholic Worker national network
- Students for Nuclear Disarmament (national membership)
- National Association of Catholic Chaplains (Catholic colleges)
- Newman Connection (national directory of college Newman Clubs/secular colleges)
- Ignatian Volunteer Corps (national network)
- Peace & Justice Studies Association (all P&JS programs in U.S. and Canadian colleges)
- Selected other colleges and universities in MA and RI
- Selected U.S. Catholic seminaries
- LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious)
- CMSM (Conference of Major Superiors of Men)
- Many other local groups we are part of and individuals we know, like the Center for Nonviolent Solutions (Worcester, MA) and Greater Springfield (MA) Campaign Nonviolence.
- Selected local, state and national elected officials

Survey Collection

The survey ran from **March 17, 2025**, until **April 30, 2025**, with 903 individuals responding. The responses are posted, with charts where applicable, in the Questions/Responses section of this report. Pax Christi MA hosted our web presence for this initiative.

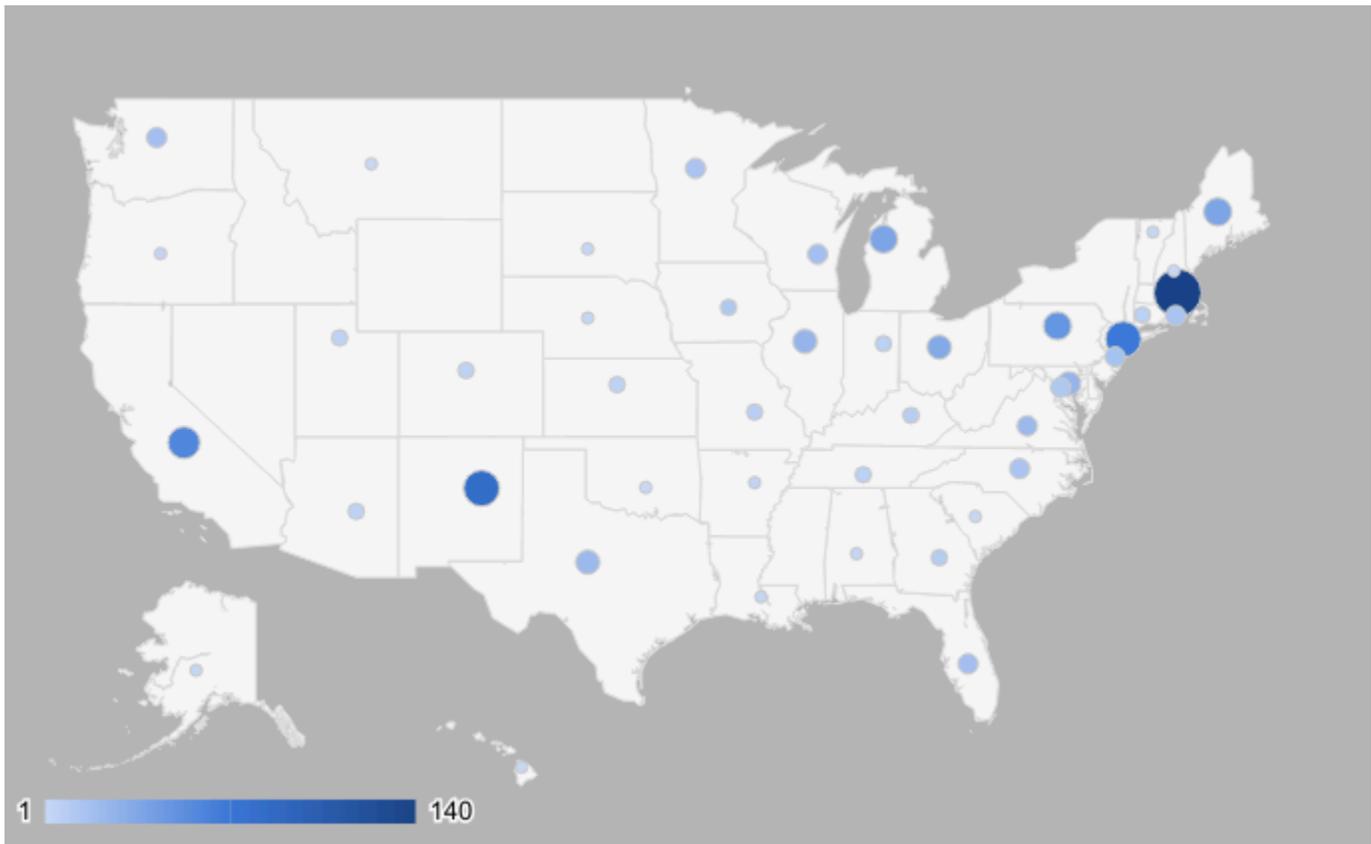
Our Respondents

We had 847 valid postal codes from the United States and 37 valid postal codes from Canada.

In the United States, Massachusetts (140) was by far the most frequent location, followed by strong responses from New Mexico (83), New York (70), California (60), Pennsylvania (49), Maine (38), Michigan (38), and Ohio (34).

From Canada, we had 23 from British Columbia, six from Ontario, six from Manitoba, and one each from Quebec and Alberta.

The distribution map below shows where the responses from the United States were concentrated.



SURVEY ANALYSIS

The Pax Christi New England Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

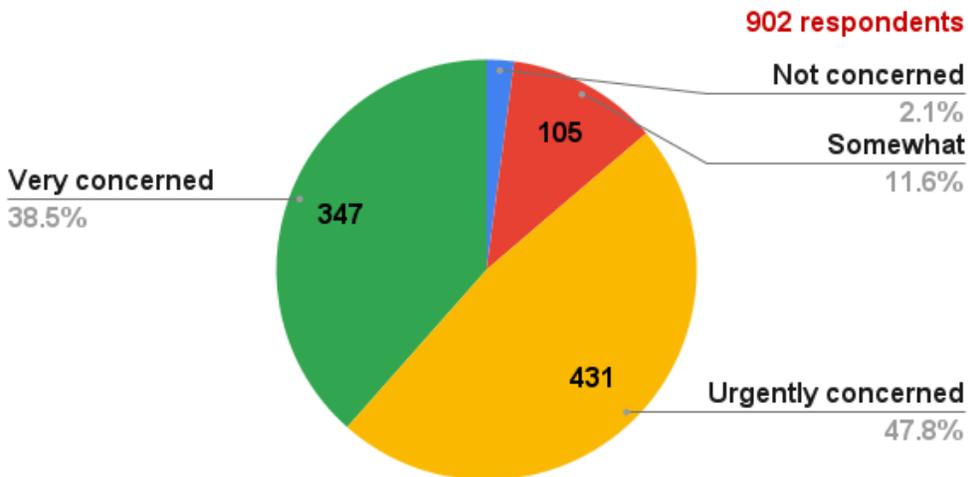
Survey 2025

RESULTS

Below are the charts from the completed survey, with 903 respondents. Where we had open-ended questions rather than multiple-choice, we offer a sampling of the answers which appeared most often, or which we found to offer particular insight.

QUESTION 1

What is your level of concern about the threat of nuclear weapons?

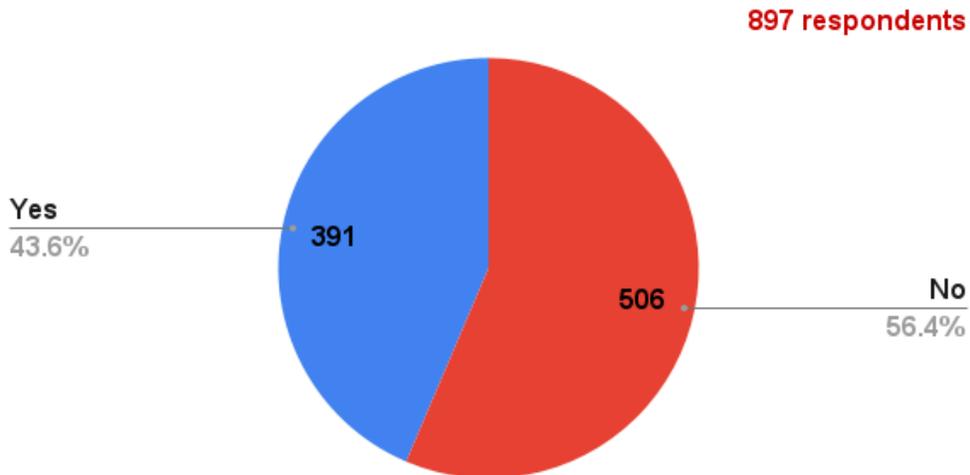


The (nuclear) arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree.

—Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*
(*The Church in the Modern World*), no. 81

QUESTION 2

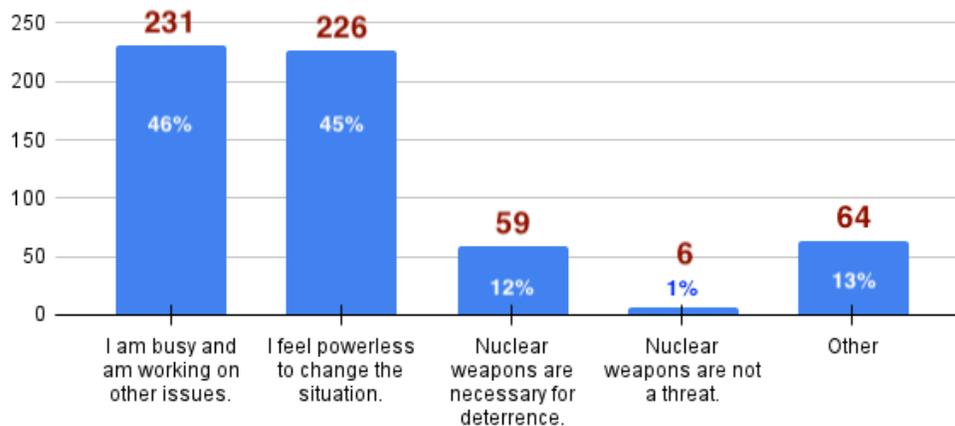
Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?



QUESTION 2a

Offered if they answered “No” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

Please share some reasons why you might have given this issue a lower priority. (Click all that apply.)



503 respondents; 586 discrete answers

Question 2b

A sampling of reasons given if they answered "Other" to Question 2a, "Some reasons for giving the nuclear weapons issue a lower priority."

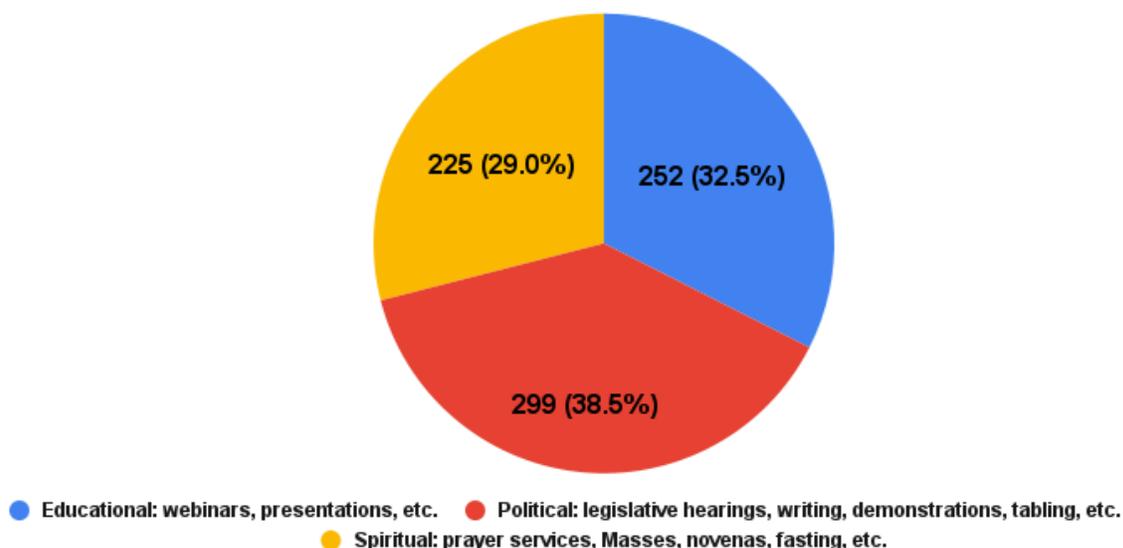
- Advanced age and physical limitations.
- Unfortunately there are so many issues/concerns, I often feel at sea as to where to begin.
- I did not know how I could work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.
- I am heavily involved with the immigrant population.
- I have highly significant family responsibilities and duties to Consistent Life Network including peacemaking advocacy.
- I am alone in a community with a nuclear submarine base.
- I am more involved with anti-war education.
- I have been working to establish equity within our diverse population. I recognize that nuclear weapons would bring about the devastation of humanity, but other issues like racial and economic injustices seemed to threaten our day-to-day existence.
- I have been involved in other justice concerns.

Question 3

Offered if they answered "Yes" to Question 2, "Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?"

What was the nature of your work? (Check all that apply, whether you were an organizer or a participant.)

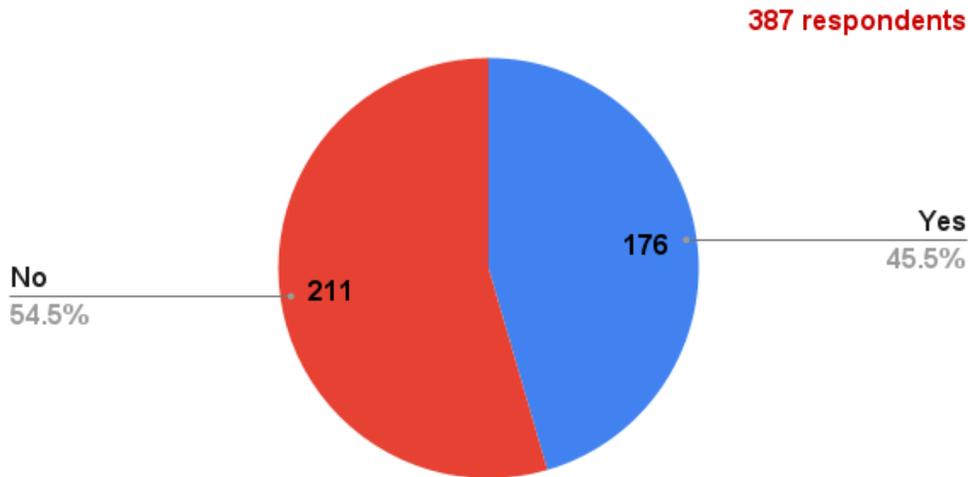
389 respondents; 776 discrete answers



Question 4

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

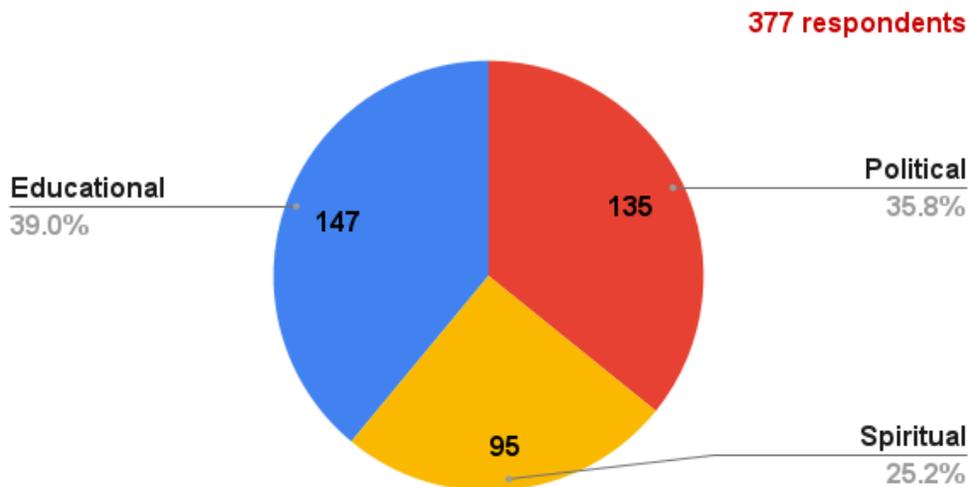
Are you involved in planning upcoming activities on this issue?



Question 4a

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?” AND “Yes” to Question 4, “Are you involved in planning upcoming activities on this issue?”

Please identify the nature of your plans. (Check all that apply, whether you plan to be an organizer or a participant.)



Questions 5 and 6: Our respondents shared rich descriptions of their work on the nuclear weapons issue, and supported those stories with photos and documents in response to these two questions. We have chosen some of the more powerful accounts and accomplishments, woven them together with the supportive materials, and we offer them as Addendum A, below.

Question 5: Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

In a few sentences, please describe the work you have done and/or the plans you are making to eliminate nuclear weapons, and let us know initiatives you found particularly effective.

Question 6: Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

The dicastery would like to see evidence of our activities (flyers, letters, videos, etc.). If you have electronic documentation of your activities, please share here.

[CLICK TO READ ADDENDUM A:
SELECT WORK DESCRIPTIONS AND SUPPORTIVE DOCUMENTATION](#)

Question 7

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

Please share any websites that support your work/plans on the issue.

Many of the resource websites shared in response to Question 7 are organized and displayed in Addendum B.

[CLICK TO READ ADDENDUM B:
A SELECTION OF RESOURCE WEBSITES SHARED](#)

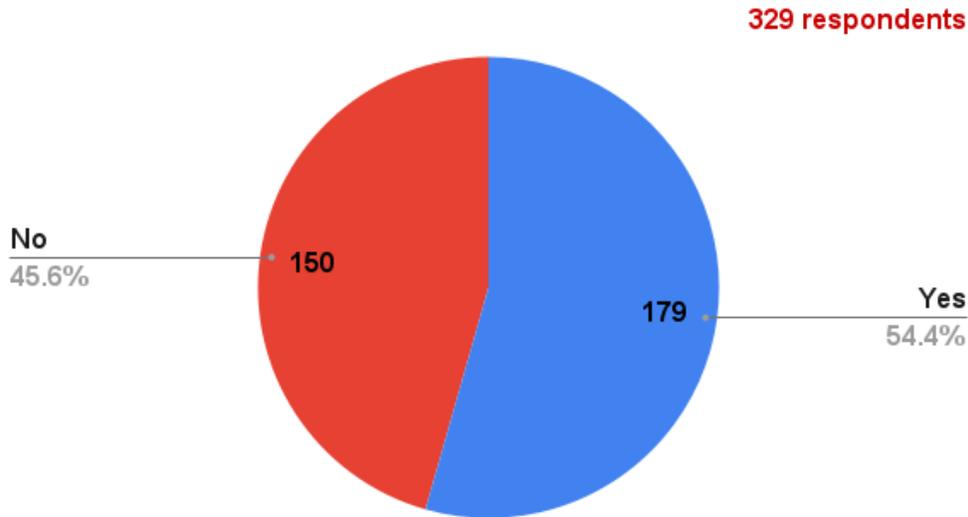
It is absolutely clear to me that we are faced with the obligation, both as human beings and as Christians, of striving in every way possible to abolish war.

—Thomas Merton, in a letter to Jim Forest, Nov. 29, 1961

Question 8

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

Are you open to being interviewed?



Mankind is confronted today with a threat unprecedented in history, arising from the massive and competitive accumulation of nuclear weapons. The existing arsenals, if employed in a major war, could result in the immediate deaths of many hundreds of millions of people, and of untold millions more later through a variety of aftereffects. For the first time, it is possible to cause damage on such a catastrophic scale as to wipe out a large part of civilisation and to endanger its very survival. The large-scale use of such weapons could trigger major and irreversible ecological and genetic changes, whose limits cannot be predicted.

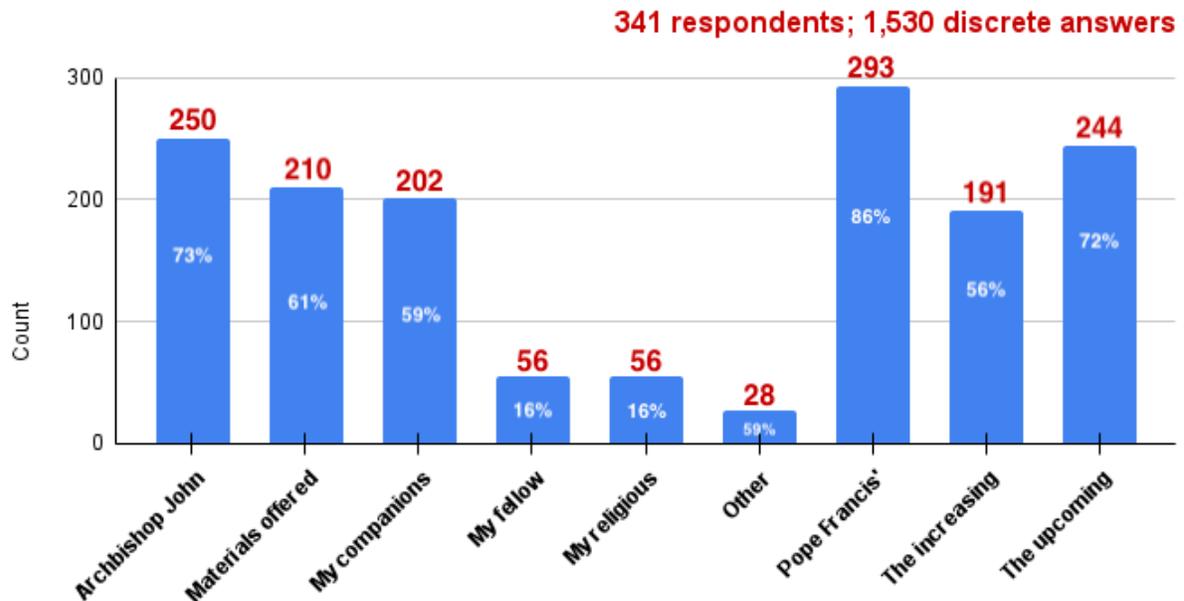
[W]e appeal...to religious leaders and other custodians of moral principles, to proclaim forcefully and persistently the grave human issues at stake so that these are fully understood and appreciated by society.

**–Pontifical Academy of Scientists
Declaration on Prevention of Nuclear War, 1982**

Question 9

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

What are the opportunities and encouragements you see to move you forward in this work? (Check all that apply.)



Choices:

- Archbishop John C. Wester's pastoral letter *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament* as a teaching tool
- Materials offered through Pax Christi USA/International
- My companions in the field
- My fellow parishioners
- My religious leaders
- Other
- Pope Francis' clear teachings on nuclear weapons
- The increasing general awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons
- The upcoming Jubilee Year and 80th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The use of a great part of the internal energy of the nucleus of uranium...has become a reality and has had its application in the making of the 'atom bomb' or 'nuclear energy bomb', the most terrible weapon which the human mind has conceived up to date.

**–Pope Pius XII, Address to the Plenary Session
of the Pontifical Academy of Science, February 1948**

Question 9a

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?” AND If they answered “Other,” to Question 9 (some other opportunities and encouragements given); a sample of answers given:

- Catholic Social Teaching
- Direct action in the manner of Jesus's being in the streets and countryside
- I am part of a study group on Gospel Nonviolence connected with Rev. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy.
- My main inspiration comes from all the young people around the world who are dedicating themselves to this issue.
- Prayers and materials offered by my religious community
- The existence of civil society organizations working for nuclear disarmament, such as Peace Action, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Ploughshares Foundation, and Citizens for Global Solutions
- The work of groups like the Beatitudes Center, Campaign Nonviolence, Pace e Bene; also, the Youth Outreach of many of these groups, including the Ellsberg Center For Excellence

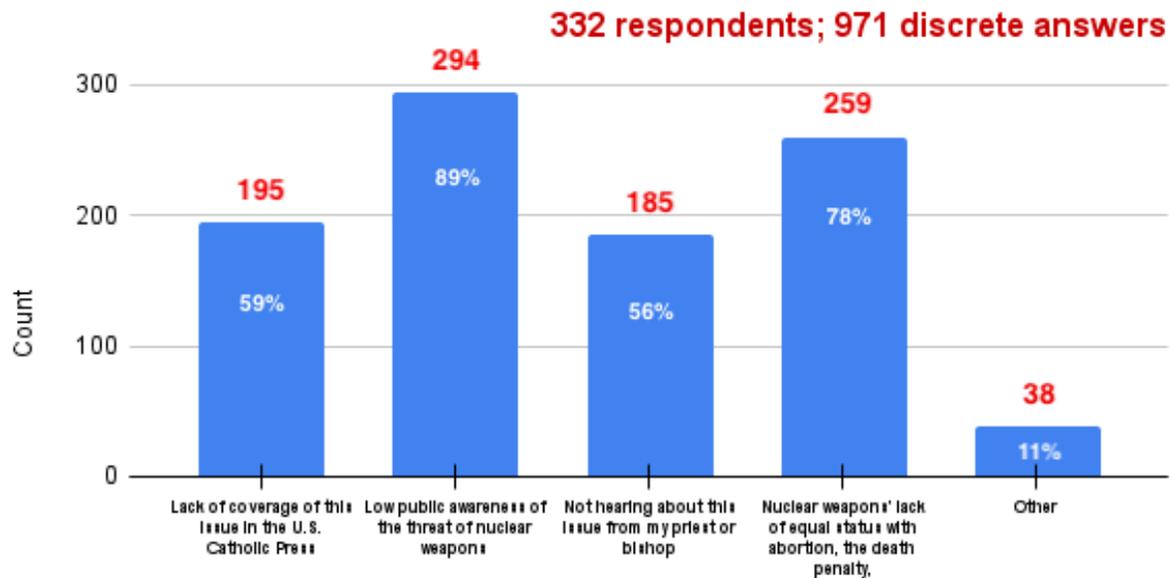


Crosses at the site of the Trinity test bombing, Trinity Remembrance Gathering July 16, 2024. Photo by Tommy Byrne

Question 10

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

What are the obstacles you encounter in your work on eliminating nuclear weapons? (Check all that apply.)



Choices:

- Lack of coverage of this issue in the U.S. Catholic Press
- Low public awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons
- Not hearing about this issue from my priest or bishop
- Nuclear weapons' lack of equal status with abortion, the death penalty, and assisted suicide as a “pro-life” issue in the church
- Other

Nuclear weapons must be banned. A general agreement must be reached on a suitable disarmament program, with an effective system of mutual control...true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust. And We are confident that this can be achieved, for it is a thing which not only is dictated by common sense, but is in itself most desirable and most fruitful of good.

–Pacem in Terris, Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty, April 11, 1963

Question 10a

Offered if they answered "Yes" to Question 2, "Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?" AND if they answered "Other," to Question 10 (some obstacles they may encounter); a sample of answers given:

- An obstacle is the heaviness of the topic - I myself would rather not think about it!
- I think many still consider nuclear weapons to be a worthwhile and effective deterrent, perhaps even a necessary one.
- In general, I find there is a feeling of hopelessness or fatalism among people I talk to about nuclear weapons. People do not feel empowered to make an impact on this issue.
- Lack of awareness or focus on the importance of building a culture of living through relationship and community on the ground level in order to address this effectively; cultural beliefs in dominance as key to a moral and well-functioning system are at the root.
- Lack of coverage in the media. The attitude of others that nothing can be done - or that those "treaties" are ineffective.
- Power and money invested in U.S. nuclear weapons
- The fear that this is too big and depressing as an issue, too complicated for "merely me"; the issue is invisible in our day-to-day lives; we are so scared we are paralyzed and slip into denial
- The Government leaders just don't seem to understand that using nuclear weapons will destroy the whole world. The effects of the radiation and all other chemicals will destroy everyone and the ability to provide food and water even if we survive.
- Other crucial issues such as authoritarianism, climate catastrophe, economic suffering
- Lack of push from church on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
- Not hearing from local parish priests; lack of coverage from news media; government agencies and businesses involved in this money-making Industry
- The notion that the nuclear menace ended with the Cold War and the lack of personal experience of the threat among young people
- Too many other urgent and important issues drawing people's attention away from existential threats of nuclear war and climate
- Wars and international insecurity, which lead government leaders and much of the public to cling to nuclear weapons

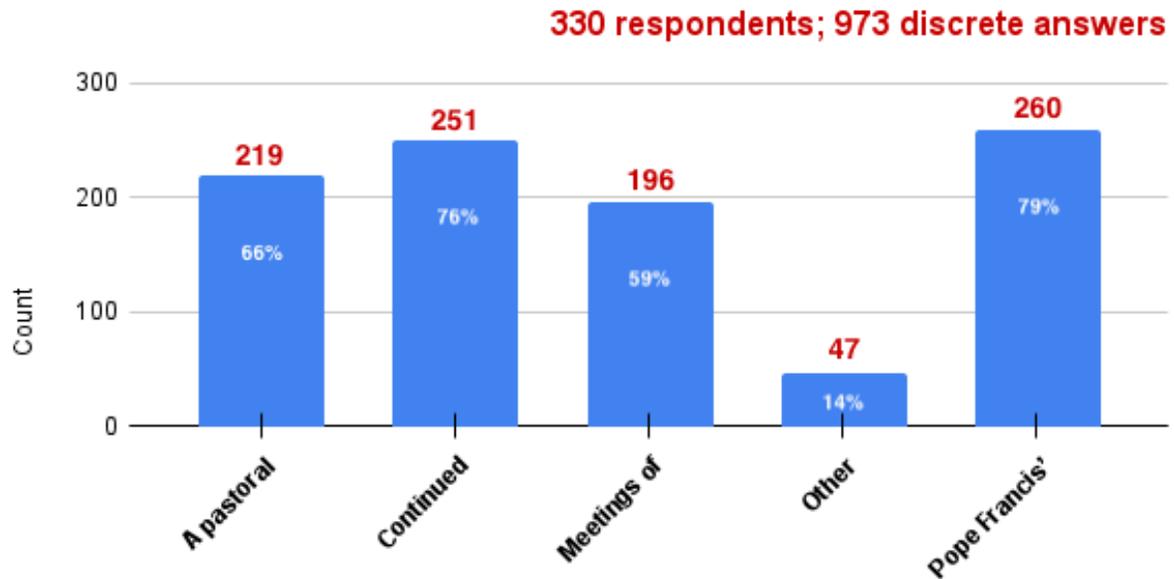
A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought...would it not be better to do away with them entirely?

-President Ronald Reagan, 1984 State of the Union Address

Question 11

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 2, “Have you worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the past two years?”

Some things that might encourage me in this work: (Click all that apply.)



Choices:

- A pastoral letter or encyclical from the Holy Father on this issue
- Continued strong messaging from the Vatican
- Meetings of Vatican officials with bishops from each nuclear nation
- Other
- Pope Francis' convening leaders of the nuclear nations on the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan

Those who think there can be a just cause for measures that gravely risk leading to the destruction of the entire human race are in the most dangerous illusion, and if they are Christian they are purely and simply arming themselves with hammer and nails, without realizing it, to crucify and deny Christ.

–Thomas Merton, *Cold War Letters*

Question 11a

Offered if they answered "Yes" to Question 2 AND if they answered "Other" to Question 11 (some encouragements they would like to see); a sample of answers given:

- A clear public statement from the U.S. Catholic Bishops following the Pope's teaching that possession of nuclear weapons is immoral; more U.S. Catholic bishops speaking out to their dioceses and joining the Partnership for a World Without Nuclear Weapons
- Advancing nonviolence and just peace work in local parishes; forming local Pax Christi groups
- Attention by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, largely absent for the last three decades
- I'd like to see education from local priests and bishops that this is an urgent matter and can be considered as a "Respect for Life" issue. Parishioners also seem to not want to address it or see it as an urgent issue.
- Leadership on this topic from the USCCB; a clear statement from Church leaders that under no circumstances may anyone in the military, especially any Catholic, give or obey an order to launch a nuclear weapon
- More coverage in the mainstream press of the dangers of nuclear weapons
- More public demonstrations calling for nuclear disarmament
- Public activism by the Catholic Church and other religious organizations in opposing nuclear weapons and fostering world peace.
- We need to make the topic alive in Catholic education across the board and do so in the context of Gospel nonviolence. Everyone of all ages needs to recognize its relevance. At the same time, we need to work to dismantle ROTC in Catholic settings.
- Younger clergy who develop an understanding and commitment to social justice issues
- Connect nuclear danger with climate change/environmental issues, which draw the attention of younger generations, in educational efforts

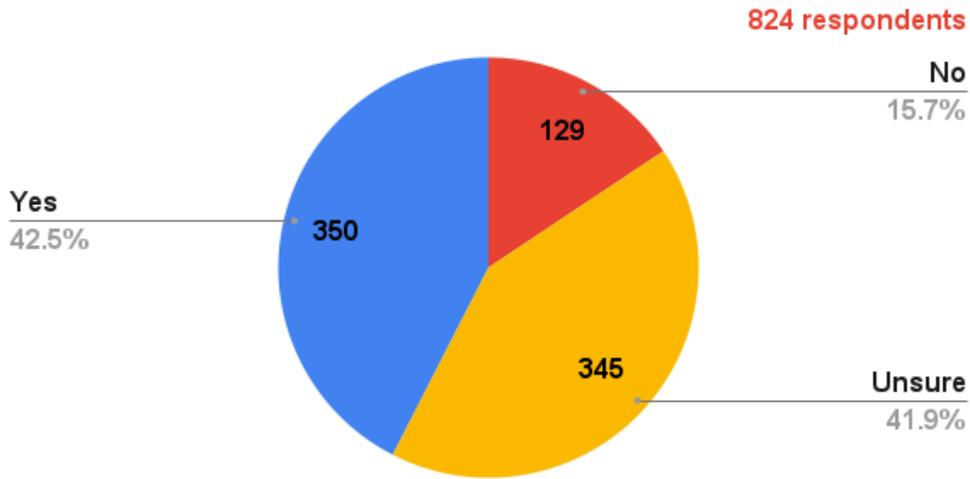
Today more than ever, humanity cries out and calls for peace. This is a cry that requires responsibility and reason, and it must not be drowned out by the din of weapons or the rhetoric that incites conflict. Every member of the international community has a moral responsibility to stop the tragedy of war before it becomes an irreparable chasm. There are no "distant" conflicts when human dignity is at stake.

War does not solve problems; on the contrary, it amplifies them and inflicts deep wounds on the history of peoples, which take generations to heal. No armed victory can compensate for the pain of mothers, the fear of children, or stolen futures.

**–Pope Leo XIV, from the Angelus Prayer in St. Peter's Square
June 22, 2025**

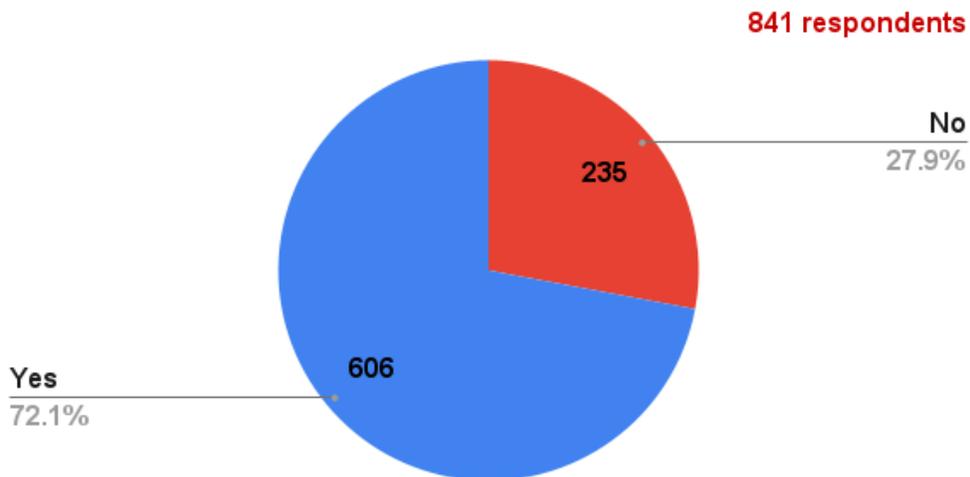
Question 12

Would you like to be more involved in eliminating nuclear weapons?



Question 13

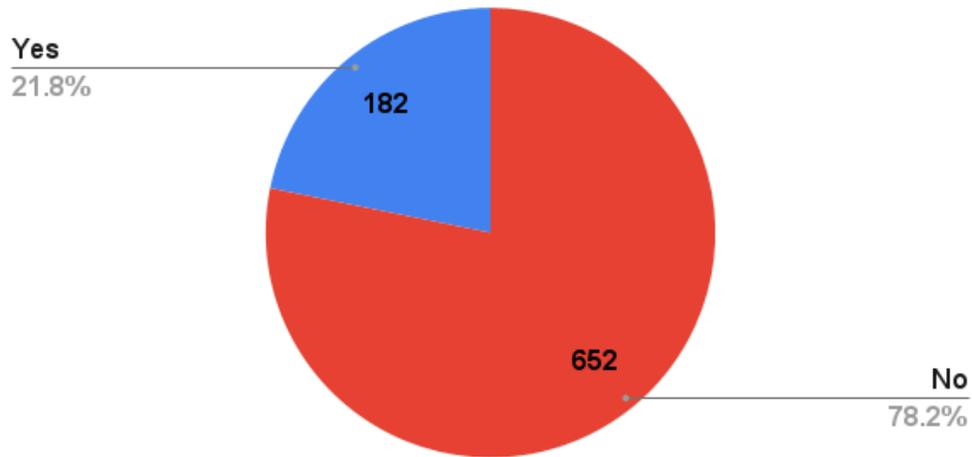
Were you aware of the pope's pronouncement that the mere possession of nuclear weapons is immoral?



Question 14

In the past two years, have you heard any homilies, prayers, presentations or anything else from your church leaders on the issue of nuclear weapons?

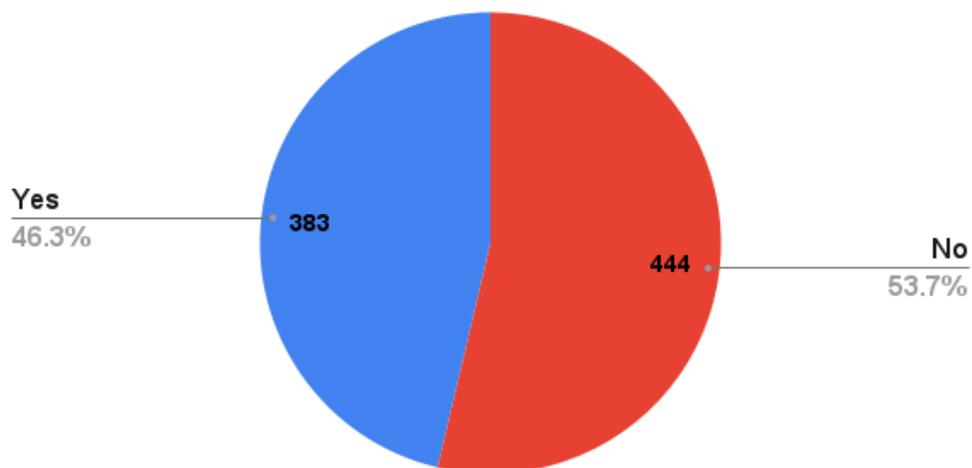
834 respondents



Question 15

Are you a member of Pax Christi?

827 respondents

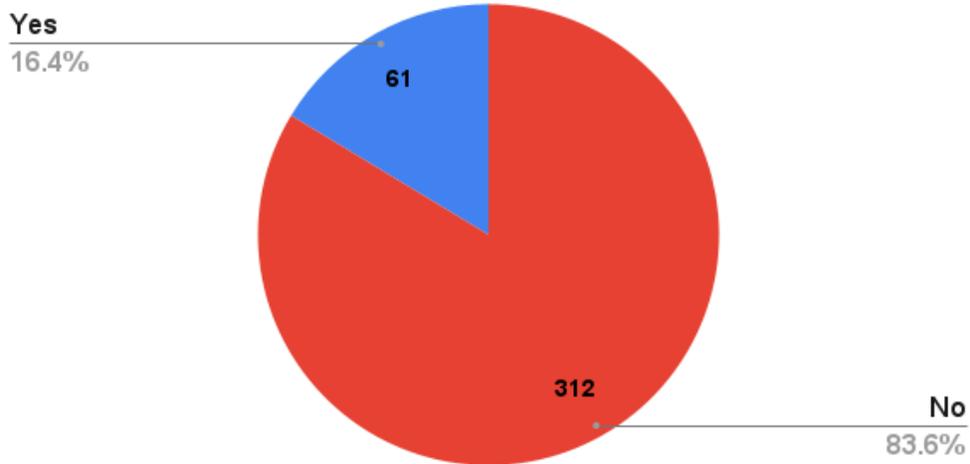


Question 15a

Offered if they answered "Yes" to Question 15, "Are you a member of Pax Christi?"

Do you hold a leadership role in Pax Christi?

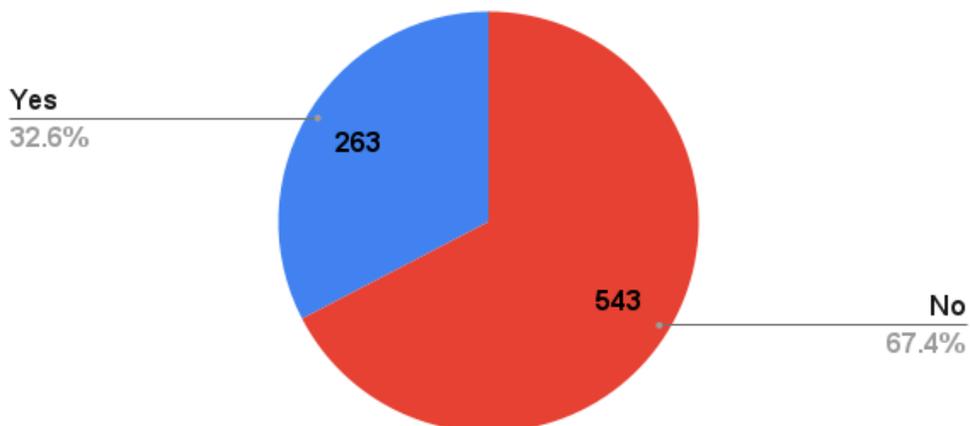
373 respondents



Question 16

Are you a member of another peacemaking group working on this issue?

806 respondents



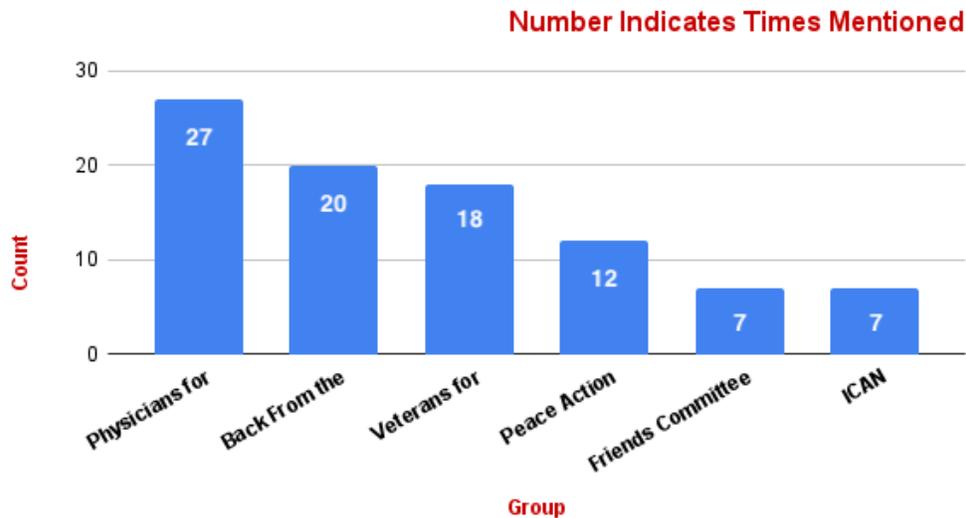
Question 16a

Offered if they answered “Yes” to Question 16, “Are you a member of another peacemaking group working on this issue?”

Question 16a

Please list the name(s) of any other peacemaking groups you belong to.

Other Peacemaking Groups Mentioned Most Often



Other peacemaking groups on chart above:

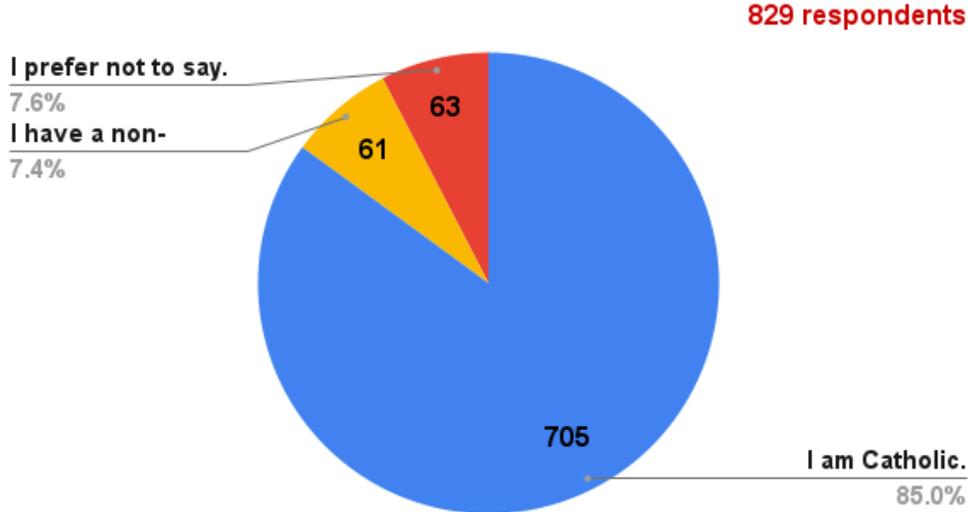
- Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Back from the Brink
- Veterans for Peace
- Massachusetts Peace Action
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)

Other peacemaking groups mentioned more than once:

- Catholic Worker, 6
- Fellowship of Reconciliation, 6
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 6
- World Beyond War, 5
- Association of Pittsburgh Priests, 4
- Norfolk Catholic Worker, 4
- Association of US. Catholic Priests, 3
- Sisters of Mercy, 3
- New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, (Quakers), 3
- Peace Action New Jersey, 3
- Amnesty International, 2
- Peace Action Maine, 2
- Rotary International, 2

Question 17

Do you have a religious affiliation?



Choices:

- I am Catholic.
- I have a non-Catholic church affiliation.
- I prefer not to say.

If the consciousness of universal brotherhood truly penetrates into the hearts of men, will they still need to arm themselves to the point of becoming blind and fanatic killers of their brethren who in themselves are innocent, and of perpetrating, as a contribution to Peace, butchery of untold magnitude, as at Hiroshima on 6 August 1945? And in fact has not our own time had an example of what can be done by a weak man, Gandhi - armed only with the principle of non-violence - to vindicate for a Nation of hundreds of millions of human beings the freedom and dignity of a new People?

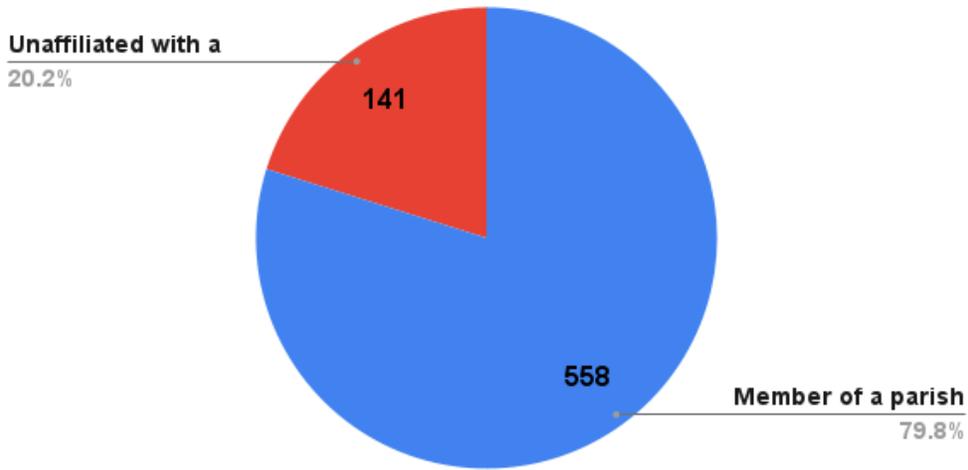
**—Pope Paul VI, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace
January 1, 1976**

Question 17a

Offered if they answered "I am Catholic" to Question 17, "Do you have a religious affiliation?"

My Catholic Church Affiliation

699 respondents



Choices:

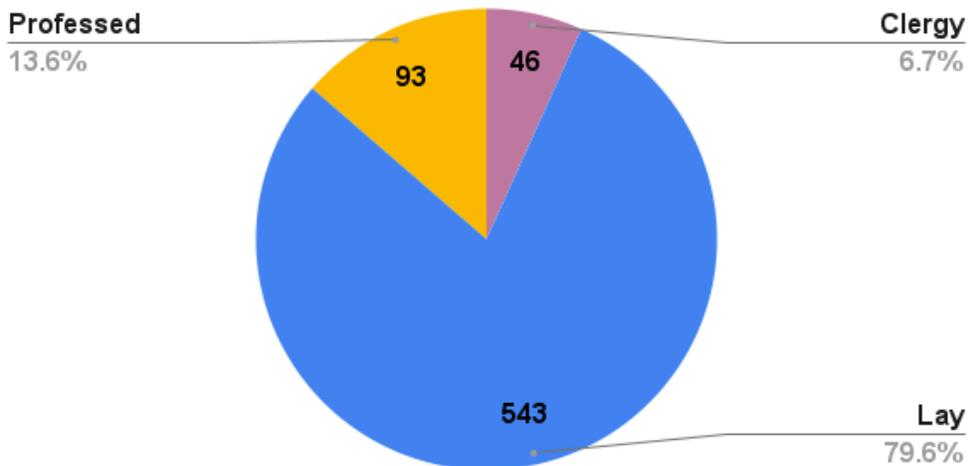
- Member of a parish
- Unaffiliated with a parish

Question 17b

If they answered "I am Catholic" to Question 17, "Do you have a religious affiliation?"

Which category best describes your role in the church?

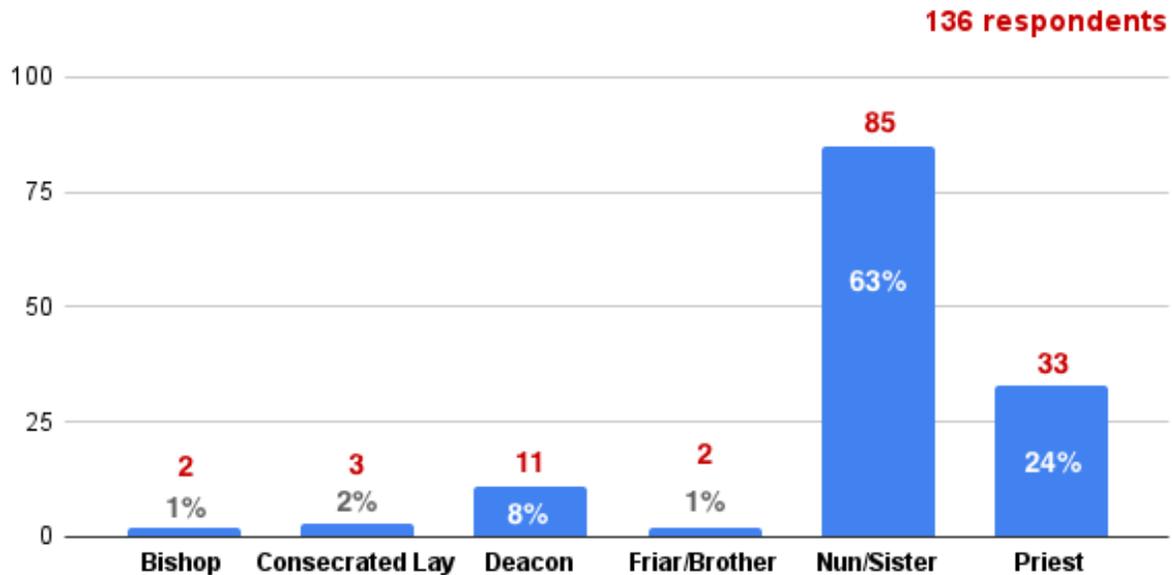
682 respondents



Question 17a and 17b breakdown

Distribution of those who answered “Clergy or Professed”

Distribution of those who answered “Clergy” or “Professed”



What should we do to move forward? First, I suggest that faith leaders should begin to take a stronger and more active stance for universal and verifiable nuclear disarmament. We should appeal to a higher morality in order to eliminate this scourge of humanity. Within faith communities, we must build enduring relationships that work on nuclear disarmament. As an example, I go back to the formal partnership that the dioceses of Santa Fe, Seattle, Hiroshima and Nagasaki have established and could expand. Moreover, I suggest that we Catholics should work to institutionalize nuclear disarmament as a critical pro-life issue into our Church, a goal worthy unto itself that could also be an excellent example for other faiths to follow.

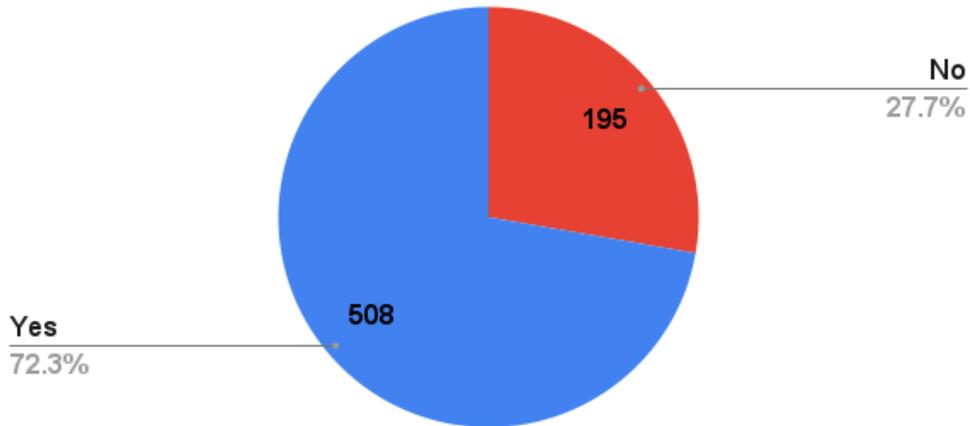
**–The Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe
Homily: The Third Way Toward Nuclear Weapons Abolition
Church of Our Savior New York City, November 29, 2023**

Some selected questions filtered for “Catholics” and “Non-Catholics”:

Question 13, Catholics:

Catholics: Were you aware of the pope’s pronouncement that the mere possession of nuclear weapons is immoral?

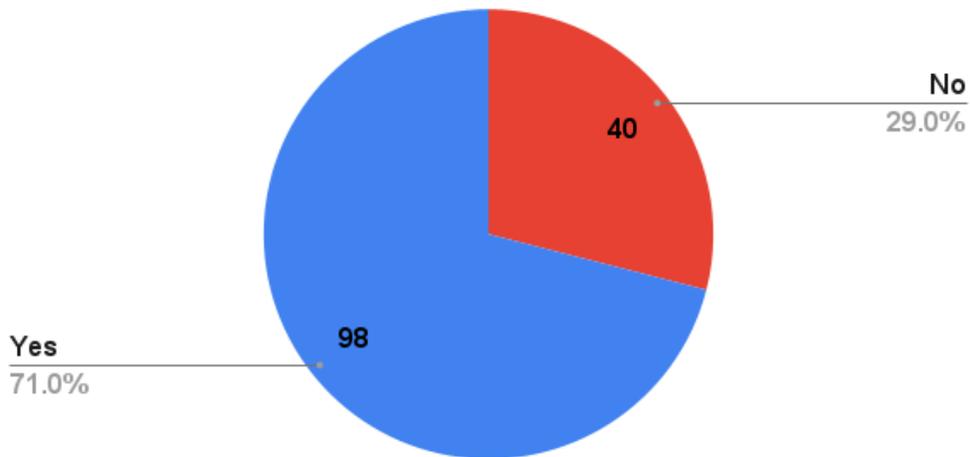
703 respondents



Question 13, Non-Catholics or “Other”:

Non-Catholics or “Other”: Were you aware of the pope’s pronouncement that the mere possession of nuclear weapons is immoral?

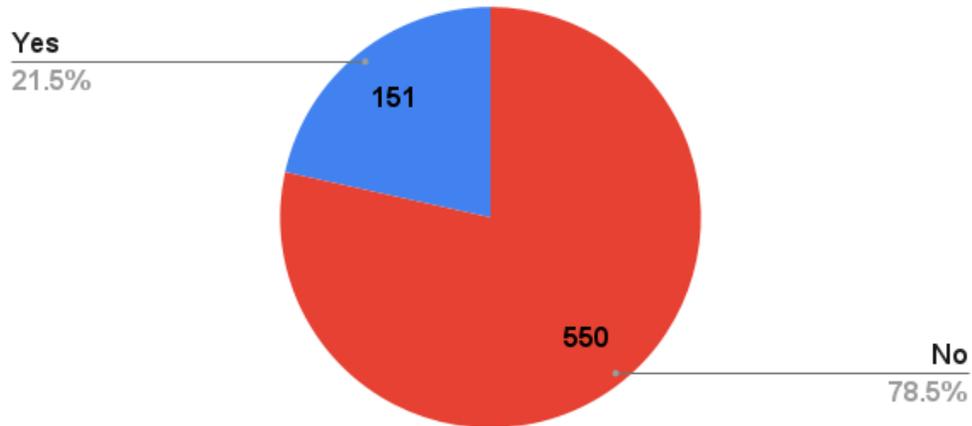
138 respondents



Question 14, Catholics:

Catholics: In the past two years, have you heard any homilies, prayers, presentations or anything else from your church leaders on the issue of nuclear weapons?

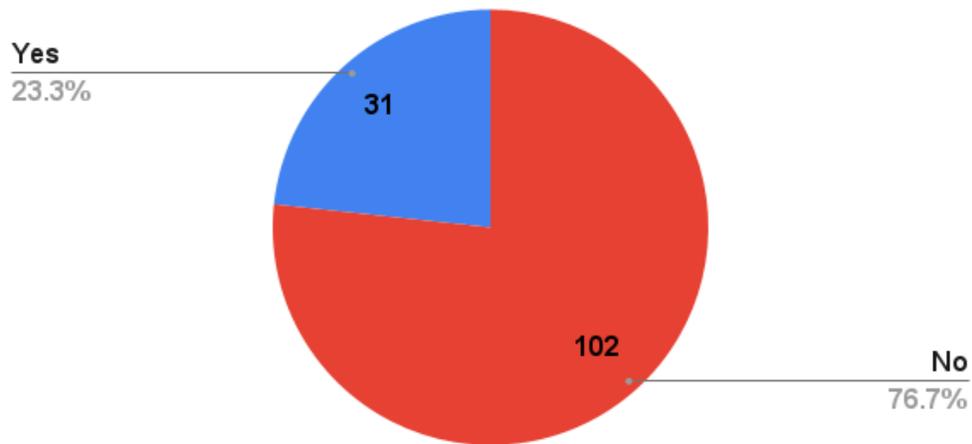
701 respondents



Question 14, Non-Catholics or "Other":

Non-Catholics or "Other": In the past two years, have you heard any homilies, prayers, presentations or anything else from your church leaders on the issue of nuclear weapons?

133 respondents



INSIGHTS

The Pax Christi New England Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Survey 2025

Below are some insights on the survey responses from individuals on the PCAN Nuclear Weapons Survey Reading/Analysis Team:

We had a wide range of backgrounds (two bishops, a number of priests, a film producer, Rotarians, Veterans for Peace), approaches (divestment, teaching, Korean hibakusha) and views (including a few deterrence supporters) among our 903 respondents.

The overwhelming majority of our respondents are firm supporters of nuclear disarmament and have worked actively to achieve it, often over a long period of time (many respondents let us know they're in their 80s and 90s).

Nine hundred and three people responded to a survey about nuclear weapons, a subject no one really wants to think about. We admire them all for chiming in and are really impressed by the rich body of descriptions of activism—political, educational, and spiritual—they offered in their work descriptions.

A total of 86.3% of respondents were urgently or very concerned about nuclear weapons. But only 43.6% worked on the issue in the last 2 years. These people could be mobilized. They are aware, but not active on the issue (Questions 1 & 2).

We were struck by the overwhelming level of concern people have and the sense of powerlessness to confront the concept of deterrence.

Of those who answered no to whether they had worked on nuclear weapons in the last two years, 45% said they felt powerless to change the situation. They need to hear Ira Helfand's talk!! His words on the possibility of nuclear disarmament are the most persuasive that we've ever heard (Q 2a).

On what has been most encouraging to respondents in their work on nuclear weapons, the highest responses are the statements and work of high-level leaders in the Catholic Church—Pope Francis and Archbishop Wester. The lowest were at the parish (or perhaps diocesan) level—"my fellow parishioners and my religious leaders." There is a huge gap between perceptions of encouragement from the top hierarchy (the pope and at least one archbishop) versus the typical parish community (Q 9).

The highest obstacles to respondents' work on the issue are the low awareness of the nuclear threat, and the lack of priority given to nuclear weapons as a pro-life issue. Given the Catholic Church's emphasis on the other pro-life issues of abortion, death penalty, and assisted suicide, which are given lots of attention from the pulpit and from bishops when there is legislation at stake, it is time for the USCCB to frame nuclear weapons as a pro-life issue, and give it promotion equal to the other issues (Q 10).

People who work on nuclear weapons want more Vatican leadership: strong messaging from the Vatican, a papal letter or encyclical, even a papal convening of nuclear nations. Perhaps this is because Pope Francis has been vocal on the issue and they see it as encouraging, as opposed to what they hear in their own parishes. It will be interesting to see how Pope Leo will handle this issue (Q 11).

The impact of Archbishop Wester's pastoral on many respondents as a source of information, inspiration and motivation to take action was very strong. The need to promote its wide distribution is clear from these comments.

Many survey respondents are supported to be active by belonging to groups like Pax Christi (especially for the "study" of nuclear disarmament) and a host of local committees. Identifying these for new people to join and advancing the proliferation of new groups seems to be indicated by the comments.

For more information and knowledge, the public needs to hear about the abolition of nuclear weapons over and over again through all media, including movies, talk shows, etc.

–Thanks to PCAN members Barbara Allaire, Ann Capoccia, Michael Moran, Linda Taylor, and Charles Washburn for their contributions to this section of our report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Pax Christi New England Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Survey 2025

We are indebted to a great many organizations and people for their inspiration, support, and work in this effort, many not named here. This project, indeed, PCAN itself, almost surely would not have happened but for the inspiration and encouragement of Archbishop John C. Wester and the inspiring guidance of Dr. Ira Helfand. The assistance, support, and encouragement of Pax Christi USA, particularly Judy Coode, director of communications, were crucial. The encouragement and support of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, particularly Alessio Pecorario, PhD, were very helpful. The 66 social justice groups listed in "About Our Survey" were essential to reaching many of our survey respondents. The members of the survey report team (listed below) put in great effort and many hours, but we give special credit to Linda Taylor: without her web and composition skills and devoted and lengthy labor, this survey and report would not exist. And we greatly thank our over 900 respondents for the time and effort they devoted to completing the survey and the knowledge and information they shared – the most important output of this survey.

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