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Strong support for nuclear power in Sweden

Almost half of the Swedes would consider new nuclear power, according to a new opinion poll by Novus. According to the poll 46 percent of the respondents want to continue to use nuclear power and, if need be, build new reactors. Over half of the respondents, 57 percent, think that nuclear power can be a tool for achieving the climate goals. Among first-time voters the support for new nuclear power is 37 percent while 58 percent of the respondents see the climate benefits with nuclear power. Energy issues have become slightly more important for those who get to vote for the first time in the Swedish election in 2022.

The role of nuclear power in the Swedish electricity grid and in the climate challenge continues to engage people. Every year Novus performs opinion polls regarding the attitudes of the Swedish population regarding nuclear power. The polls are ordered by Analysgruppen, which is a network of experts and researchers from the energy field, the nuclear industry, and academia.

– The latest survey, from May 2021, shows an unprecedented high support for nuclear power. We have had the same question and responses since 2006. This time 46 percent responded that they want to continue to use nuclear power and, if need be, build new reactors, says Mattias Lantz, researcher at Uppsala university and chairman of Analysgruppen.

According to the latest poll 46 percent of the respondents want to continue to use nuclear power and if needed build new reactors, 31 percent want to use the existing reactors but not build new ones, 10 percent are hesitant and 14 percent want to phase out nuclear power through political decisions.

Respondents in the age group 18-29 years used to be more sceptical to nuclear power, but since a few years back their support has increased. In the latest poll it is 37 percent who want to build new reactors if needed, 34 percent want to continue to use the existing reactors but not build any new ones, 18 percent are hesitant and 10 percent want to phase out nuclear power through political decisions.

– One notable trend is that the fraction in the younger age group that wants to phase out nuclear power with political decisions has decreased from 30 percent to 10 percent in four years. My guess is that the younger group realises that every kilogram of carbon dioxide is important in the climate challenge and that we therefore cannot waste valuable time on closing down fully functional reactors in advance, says Mattias Lantz.

In another question 57 percent of the respondents say that nuclear power can partly or fully be a tool for reaching the climate goals, while 21 percent answer only to a smaller degree or not at all. 21 percent answer that it does not make a difference. The same question is asked every year in a poll in Finland, and the support in Sweden is actually somewhat higher. In Finland 51 percent answer yes and 16 percent answer no to the same question.

First time voters 2022 about nuclear power and the climate goals

The same questions have been asked in a separate poll to young people who get to vote for the first time in the Swedish elections 2022. Among them 37 percent want to continue to use nuclear power and, if need be, build new reactors, 35 percent want to continue to use the existing reactors but not build new ones, 11 percent are undecided, and 17 percent want to phase out nuclear power with political decisions.

On the question if nuclear power can be a tool for reaching the climate goals 58 percent answer yes while 23 percent answer no.

– The fraction of hesitant among first-time voters was relatively high when we asked this question for the first time in 2019. Since then the fraction that supports continued use of nuclear power, and who sees it as a tool in the climate challenge, has increased, while the fraction of hesitant respondents has decreased, says Mattias Lantz.

Besides the climate challenge the public debate during the last year has included issues such as the role of nuclear power in a stable electricity grid, discussions about the planned geological repository for used nuclear fuel, and the shutdown of two reactors at the Ringhals nuclear power plant. But some new issues have also arisen, such as an increased need for electricity and the possibilities that small modular reactors may bring to a fossil-free society.

– The interest for energy politics has been low among young people, but the last two years we have seen a slight change, says Viktor Wemminger at Novus. From a low level the fraction that says that energy politics is an important issue has almost doubled from 10 to 18 percent among those who get to vote for the first time in 2022. The environment and the climate challenge, health care, and education are the issues that the first-time voters think are the most important.

Analysgruppen has since 1997 followed the Swedish opinion regarding nuclear power. The poll has been conducted through web interviews in a randomly recruited panel by Novus. 1025 persons in the age span 18-79 years have responded to the questions during the time period 19–26 may 2021, and 537 first-time voters have responded during the time period 22-31 may 2021. The response rate was 57 and 50 percent in each poll, respectively. Both surveys can be found (in Swedish) on the web page of Analysgruppen: [analys.se](https://www.analys.se). The opinion poll in Finland was conducted in april 2021 by Kantar TNS by order from Energiateollisuus (Finnish Energy), which is a branch organisation for the energy sector in Finland.

Analysgruppen is an independent network financed by the Swedish nuclear power plants.

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