



the center for deliberative democracy

Center for Deliberative Democracy
Stanford University
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Italy's First Deliberative Poll offers the Informed Views of Citizens on Health Care and on Investment Priorities

On December 3, the Regione Lazio held the first Deliberative Poll®¹ ever conducted in Italy to get the views of a scientific sample of citizens about difficult budget choices facing the region. Deliberative Polling begins with a survey of the conventional sort and then convenes the scientific sample to meet together in small groups and in larger sessions with competing experts. At the end of the process the participants take the same questionnaire as when first contacted. By the end of the process, the respondents were much more informed about the issues and they had changed their views in some significant ways. They considered two issues, health care and how to invest the proceeds from Ethical Bonds.

On health care, the most notable result was that the percentage believing the Regione should “convert some of its beds into other resources that make the structures more efficient” went from 45% before deliberation to 62%. Apparently, the participants did not object to the high idea of a high number of beds, but they did support changes that might allow the resources to be used more efficiently. When asked whether “a high number of beds is a sign that public health care is not working very well.” Majorities disagreed, both before and after (62% before and 65% after). Support for converting some of the hospital beds specifically into “poly-ambulatory facilities where you can go for some checks that now you can receive only through hospitalization” changed only slightly, but was very high both before and after—87% before and 85% after deliberation.

On Ethical Bonds, the participants were asked to offer their priorities, among four possibilities, for how the money from ethical bonds should be spent. The options were: Restoring the schools in the territory, Reclamation of water resources, Strengthening differentiated waste collection and waste management, improving the network of those transports which respect the environment and are less pollution. Before deliberation the relative priorities were transportation, waste schools and water. After deliberation, the relative priorities were transportation, schools, waste and water.

¹ Deliberative Polling is a registered trade mark of James S. Fishkin. Any fees from the trade mark are used to support research.

The participants became dramatically more informed over the course of the deliberations. They were asked specific information questions both before and after. Correct answers for the six information questions increased by an average of 44 points. The questions concerned issues such as the highest item of expense in the Lazio budget (health care--correct answers increasing from 75% to 90%), the financial requirements for Ethical Bonds (correct answers increasing from 14 to 47%), and whether Ethical Bonds offer the same rate of return as state bonds (correct answers increasing from 29 to 59%). The pattern in Deliberative Polls has been for those who increase in knowledge to change their views. The sample offers a public voice worth listening to because it is a scientific microcosm of the population offering its views after it has had a chance to become more informed.

The participants offered a very high evaluation of the process. 97.5% of the participants agreed that “My small group moderator provided the opportunity for everyone to participate in the discussion.” 92.4% agreed that “The important aspects of the issues were covered in the group discussions.” 76.5% agreed that “opposing aspects were considered” and 90% disagreed that “My small group moderator sometimes tried to influence the group with his or her own views.” In addition, 63% said that they had “read all or nearly all of the briefing materials” and 77% said that they had read “half or more.”

The participants for the day came from a scientific sample interviewed by ISPO. There were 1,990 initial interviews. If one compares the 119 who participated on the day with the other 1,881 in the initial sample, there were only a few statistically significant differences on the specific policy issues that were the subject of deliberation. However, the participants did show some demographic differences: they were somewhat older, somewhat more educated, somewhat more well off. In addition, they were somewhat more left-leaning in their general political orientation. However, when the sample was weighted by ideology, the main results remained unchanged.

The project was conducted by ISPO and Reset in conjunction with academic advisors from the US. The team included Renato Mannheimer (ISPO), Giancarlo Bosetti (Reset), Mauro Buonocore (Reset), and James Fishkin (Stanford University) and Robert C. Luskin (Stanford and the University of Texas at Austin). For more on Deliberative Polling see <http://cdd.stanford.edu>

Reset

Deliberative Polls

A new instrument to help politics in controversial choices and improve the participation of citizens to public life. It is the Deliberative Poll. James Fishkin from Stanford University created it, and after several applications throughout the world it finally reached Italy. It was a success. Regione Lazio asked a representative sample of the population to get informed and discuss topics such as health care and investments from the ethical bond. The result: at the end of the discussion, they knew much more about both issues, their opinion changed, becoming more competent and the approval for the event was so high that they said they would do it again.

*Press Conference
Rome, January 8th 2007 - 11.00 a.m.
Fnsi – Sala “Azzurra” – I floor
Corso Vittorio Emanuele, 349*

Rome, January 8th 2007 – They are more informed about health care, ethical finance, environment, mobility and schools, but also very satisfied of their participation and ready to do it again. They are the 119 citizens involved in the first Deliberative Poll that took place in Italy last december 3rd, in Regione Lazio. The initiative, that made the citizens the main active characters of public opinion for one day, turned out to be very successful. The method used, Deliberative Polling®, created by James Fishkin from Stanford University is strengthened by ten years of experience in different contexts (from US presidential elections to the European referenda, to local policies and controversial matters of national relevance). Deliberative Polling® reached Italy thanks to the initiative of Piero Marrazzo, president of Regione Lazio and Luigi Nieri, regional council treasurer, and in cooperation with *Reset* magazine, edited by Giancarlo Bosetti, and Ispo (Institute for the Studies of Public Opinion), directed by Renato Mannheimer.

After an ordinary poll on a representative sample, the citizens were invited to spend an entire day in the building of Regione Lazio; they debated, asked questions to the experts, listened to the answers and, finally, answered again to the questions of the ordinary poll but with a new competence, as the results show.

After a day of deliberation, in fact, the 85% of the sample declared a clearer idea about the issues addressed; this greater knowledge resulted in a change of opinion between the first and the last poll (for example, people that agreed on “converting hospital beds in resources in order to improve the efficiency of the structures” went from 45 to 62%). Among the

questions there were some trying to identify the citizens' level of information; at the end of the deliberative day, the correct answers were a lot more than at the beginning, particularly the 90% (in the face of an original 75%) answered that the health-care is the main item of expense in the regional budget, and those who knew the number of the exceeding hospital beds in comparison with the agreement between the State and Regions went from 7% to 58%. At the same time, with regard to the ethical finance, the 59% (vs. an initial 29%) answered correctly about the features of the ethical bond.

The liking of the initiative shown by the participants was very high. They judged the experience extremely precious, and the 82% of them said to be available to participate again to similar events.

Participants to the press conference for the presentation of the results of the first deliberative poll in Italy:

Giuliano Amato, Minister of Interior

Giancarlo Bosetti, Reset editor-in-chief

Renato Mannheimer, University of Bicocca, Milan

Piero Marrazzo, President of Regione Lazio

Luigi Nieri, Regione Lazio Council Treasurer

Invitees to discuss the deliberative poll

Linda Lanzillotta, Minister of Regional Affairs; **Ricardo Franco Levi**, Undersecretary of the Premiership;

Franco Bassanini, **Sergio Bellucci**, **Angelo Bonelli**, **Daniele Capezzone**, **Alessandro Curzi**, **Angelo Maria Petroni**, **Stefano Rodotà**

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