deliberative democracy

ENERGY CHOICES

Results from Deliberative Polling®1 - An Innovative Public Consultation Method

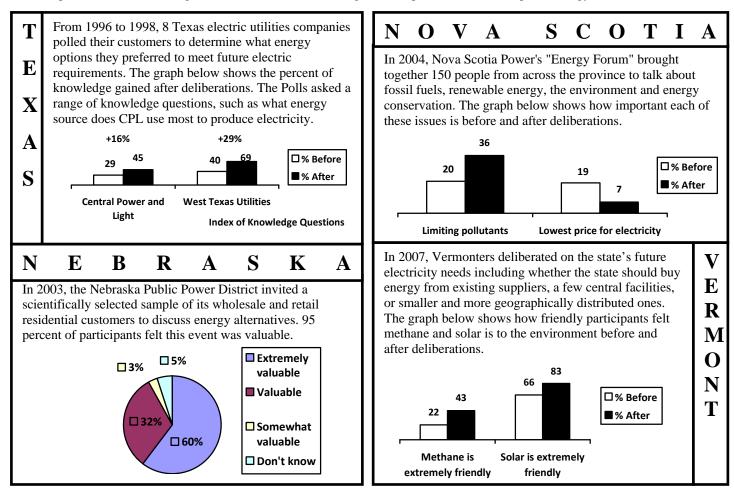
- Averaging across 8 Deliberative Polls in Texas, the percentage willing to pay more on their monthly bill for wind and solar energy increased from 52% to 84%
- After a result of a series of Deliberative Polls there, the state of Texas has become the leading state in wind power in the US
- Support for Vermont's electricity to be produced mostly or entirely inside Vermont dropped from 78% to 69%

Why Deliberative Polling®?

<u>The Problem</u> Citizens are often uninformed about key public issues. Conventional polls represent the public's surface impressions of sound bites and headlines. The public, subject to what social scientists have called "rational ignorance," has little reason to confront trade-offs or invest time and effort in acquiring information or coming to a considered judgment.

<u>The Approach</u> Deliberative Polling is an attempt to use public opinion research in a new and constructive way and present results of a poll with a human face. A random, representative sample is first polled on targeted issues. After this baseline poll, members of the sample are invited to gather at a single place to discuss target issues. Carefully balanced briefing materials are sent to the participants and are also made publicly available. The participants engage in dialogue with competing experts and policymakers based on questions developed in small groups with trained moderators. During this process, participants are not asked to reach any consensus or decisions. Participants are asked only to deliberate on topics at hand. Parts of the weekend events are broadcast on television, either live or in taped and edited form. After deliberations, the sample is again asked the original questions. The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had the opportunity to become more informed and engaged by the issues.

Here are quick summaries of 4 regions where Deliberative Polling® was implemented for the topic of energy choices.



¹ Deliberative Polling is a registered trade mark of James S. Fishkin. All income from the trade mark is used to support activities and research of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University. Please visit the CDD website for more information: http://cdd.stanford.edu.