

Investigation of Public Discourse Methods in Energy Policy Decision-Making

A Summary of What You Told Us and What We Learned

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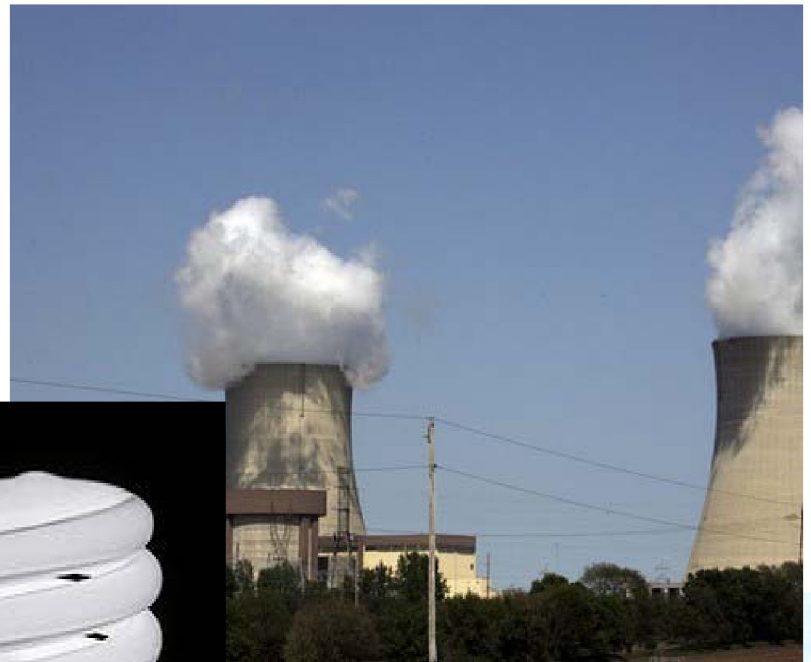
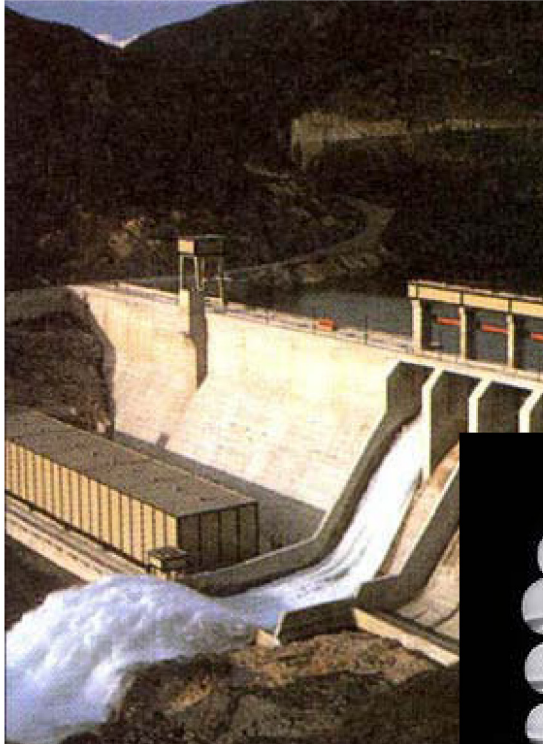
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**Prepared for the
U.S. Department of Energy
Through the INL LDRD Program
Under DOE Idaho Operations Office
Contract DE-AC07-05ID14517**

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Acknowledgements

This research project was made possible by the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) through the lab directed research funding (LDRD) mechanism. The research team recognizes and thanks INL for grant funding to support the resources required for this multi-year project.

The Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES), a consortium of three Idaho public universities and the INL, provided the impetus for the partnership of Idaho State University, the University of Idaho, Boise State University, and the INL. The three universities provided direct and indirect support for the research team, as well.

The project team acknowledges the time and energy given by you, the deliberative poll attendees, the subject matter experts, the deliberation facilitators and the myriad of people who helped conduct the deliberation event. Additionally, the American Democracy Project, in conjunction with Stanford University's Center for Deliberative Polling, provided training and technical expertise for the deliberation event.

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A Summary of What You Told Us & What We Learned

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The ground is littered with projects that failed because of strong public opposition. This includes natural gas, nuclear, and coal-fired power plants proposed in Idaho in the past several years. Did those proposing these projects understand what local citizens thought about these energy projects before they were overwhelmed with citizen opposition?

This joint project of the Idaho National Laboratory, Boise State University, Idaho State University and University of Idaho wanted to discover how you, the public, would engage in discussion and consideration of a “problem” for which there is no easy solution. From this study, the research team aimed to provide decision makers with information about public attitudes and concerns regarding electricity generation in Idaho. Ultimately, understanding how to engage the public in discussions of difficult problems reduces the risk that an agency will choose an unacceptable solution to that problem.

Many methods have been used in the past to inform the decision makers about what the public wants. Standard public polling provides some of this information but does not reveal underlying motivations, intensity of attitudes, or how citizens reason through complex trade-offs. To make good choices for our society, we must improve the methods of engaging citizens, at the individual and group level. And, those engaged must not represent only the extreme views. Your perceptions¹ are important in a democracy. We wanted to know how different levels of knowledge and information affect your opinions. Our hope is that what we learn can be translated into ways that scientists, engineers, bureaucrats and others (who make decisions on your behalf) can change the way they typically engage you, to come to better solutions to energy problems.

This document is the summary of a 3-year effort to test different public discourse methods in the subject area of energy policy decision-making. We analyzed 504 mail-in surveys and data collected from about 75 participants who came to Boise State University on April 18, 2009 for a Deliberation Day event.

We measured your preference for different electricity generation options, your support for those options (by way of the dollar values you assigned), and your evaluation of eight attributes that we thought would form your energy preferences. As you may recall, the options presented were only for electricity generation common for Idaho. The options you ‘deliberated’ about were energy conservation

¹ We use the term “perception” to refer to the mental short-cuts, underlying beliefs, and paradigms that we all use to filter and interpret information, as well as reasoned attitudes based on contemplation of information.

and efficiency, fossil fuels, nuclear energy, hydropower, and renewable energy. The results from those questions are found on pages 8 - 10.

Background and Motivation

Traditionally, the “hard science” approach to policy making has been the ‘Decide-Announce-Defend’ (DAD) model as shown in Figure 1. This traditional approach often neglects to engage stakeholder groups and individuals who are interested in the issue. Sometimes this approach may try to educate the citizenry (and change your mind), or negotiate with stakeholders to get the desired decision. None of these approaches work well, especially when those who are most affected by a decision must resort to extreme means to get heard (e.g. a lawsuit, strikes, etc.)



FIGURE 1. The traditional DAD project approach.

Energy policy in Idaho is a timely topic for all Idahoans, and particularly at the four Idaho institutions that are the Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES). Historically, Idaho has had inexpensive electricity generated by hydroelectric facilities. As the population has grown, electricity needs have been met by importing power (typically from fossil fuels) into the state. Currently, Idaho needs to develop new sources of electricity generation for economic development. At the national level, energy policy is evolving with the objective of decreasing our dependence on foreign sources of energy, including fuels for electricity generation. The national dialogue includes concerns about the impact of fossil fuels on greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental concerns.² Refer here to the briefing document---direct people to its location on the web site since everyone did not receive it...same goes for its mention below. People who did not receive it should have easy access to it.

Forms of Citizen Deliberation

Around the world, especially in democratic societies, various forms of citizen involvement have been developed to inform policy making. These include citizen’s juries, consensus conferences, collaborative polls, interactive panels, town meetings, focus groups, and research panels. They have been suggested as an alternative to traditional public comment periods and opinion polls to enhance democratic decision-making across a wide variety of public issues. However, Deliberative Polling as conceived by James S. Fishkin (see Stanford University’s Center for Deliberative Democracy at <http://cdd.stanford.edu/>) is thought to be one of the more innovative methods because, under some circumstances, the results from a relatively small sample of citizens can be generalized to a wider population.

Proponents of Deliberative Polling claim that this method induces both mutual learning and consensus building. Since a group of diverse people faced with complex topics typically does not have a pre-defined consensus, the claim of consensus building requires that some or all of participants change their opinion as a result of Deliberative Polling. An assumption of Deliberative Polling is that participants may change their point of view when supplied with unbiased information or facts. This means that (a)

² The ‘energy briefing document’ is found at <http://sspa.boisestate.edu/publicpolicycenter/publications/>

participants must be both motivated and able to process information and (b) their assessment of the arguments presented lead in a common direction.

We structured our project to test the potential for change via Deliberative Polling in comparison with other approaches (such as attending a conference, or a lecture, or a survey. One benefit of Deliberative Polling over a traditional public opinion poll is the assumption that policy decision makers can gather opinions from a more informed public. However, it has seen limited use due to the amount of time required and higher cost compared with traditional opinion polls, or a typical public meeting.

Scientists, policy makers, and those interested in democracy and citizen engagement are unsure if the deliberative polling method works ‘better’ than other ways of informing citizens or shaping public policy. We wanted to know if Deliberative Polling is a good alternative to the other methods of finding out what citizens in a democracy want.

What we wanted to achieve

As with any research project, we had some questions that we wanted to answer. We designed the study so that we could:

- Describe your preferences and level of support for five energy options that are well-known or that people are simply familiar with in Idaho;
- Determine how the typical methods (a conference, poll, lecture, etc.) and deliberation would affect your preferences and level of support for the different electricity generation options;
- Determine which, if any of the communication methods we used might affect your support for technical research or other policy alternatives that could eliminate (or improve) the five options we studied to meet electricity demand;
- Determine if your demographic and civic engagement levels affect preference and support for different options for meeting electricity demand and their preference/support for improvements in energy options; and,
- Determine if your evaluations of the expert speakers affected your support for different options for meeting electricity demand.

How we collected the data

We surveyed a random sample of 5,000 residents from a 7-county area in the Treasure Valley in January of 2009. Of those mailed, 504 of you returned the survey via mail. We asked those of you who said you were interested attend an event about Idaho’s energy options on April 18, 2009, at the Boise State campus.

We randomly assigned you to different activities (or “treatments”). For example, some of you received a detailed 35-page “briefing document” (see the previous footnote) that included pros and cons of the different energy options and some of you did not. Some of you participated in small group “deliberation” sessions with other citizens and some of you did not. All of you at the event heard an overview presentation by Michael Louis of the Energy Policy Institute in the morning. His talk was a ‘balanced’ described Idaho’s energy situation and highlights of pros and cons of the five energy options, but did not advocate for one option versus another. (This information was taken directly from the document that some of you received.) Those that attended the deliberative discussion sessions got to discuss the energy options with other citizens. These deliberation groups generated questions for the

expert panel to answer. The rest of you were put in a 'lecture' group to listen to a non-energy related talk.

You all saw an 'expert panel' at lunch. These panelists answered questions that were generated by some of the small groups. This panel was designed to be as neutral as possible. In other words, we did not want a strong advocate to preach the virtues of one option versus another. The members of the panel included: **Marsha Smith**, Idaho Public Utilities Commissioner; **Pat Ford**, Executive Director – Save Our Wild Salmon; **Ralph Bennett**, Director – International and Regional Partnerships at the Idaho National Laboratory; **Arjun Makhijani**, President of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research; **Bob Neilson**, (Retired), Former manager of Renewable Energy & Power at the Idaho National Laboratory; **David Solan**, Assistant Professor of Public Policy & Administration – Boise State University; and, **Mark Stokes**, Manager of Power Supply Planning, Idaho Power Company. Some of you found that frustrating. Some of you went to a lecture by Dr. John Freemuth, Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Boise State University, and did not have an opportunity to have your questions answered. (And, we apologize if you were frustrated!) You all completed surveys after the day's activities, which included the same key questions as on the survey mailed to you in January.

Here is a brief summary of the "treatments" used in our experiment.

- Those in attendance at the event on the Boise State campus, April 18, 2009, where everyone listened to Mike Louis' presentation and listened to the session with a panel of seven experts. Some of you:
 - Got no briefing paper, no deliberation sessions
 - Got no briefing paper, attended two deliberation sessions (before and after the expert panel)
 - Received the briefing paper, no deliberation sessions
 - Received the briefing paper, attended two deliberation sessions
- Those who did not attend the event on April 18 got one of the following treatments:
 - Mailed survey only. (This was our control group.)
 - Mailed survey and briefing paper (So we could tell if coming to the event affected your preferences.)
 - Mailed survey during the weekend of the event to a group that had not previously mailed surveyed and did not participate in the event. (Another control group so we could determine if some external event might have affected outcomes.)

Results from the Mail in Survey

Compared with the average Idahoan, those who responded to the mail-in survey (we call these respondents) were typically male (78% vs. 49%), had more formal education (50% with 4-year degree vs. 16% of Idahoans in general), and were more civically engaged (96% claimed to have voted in an election in the past two years vs. 61% that voted in the 2008 general election). Most of the respondents reported being White/Caucasian (91%) and less than 1% of respondents indicated Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. Respondents were also older than average and had lived longer than average in the state.

It is tempting to speculate that those who answered the initial mail-in survey and especially those who came to the April event were more likely to feel that their opinions mattered in this situation, but we cannot say that for sure because we did not ask. (However, Idaho's elected officials are typically older Caucasian males, with high levels of education and longer-than-average residence in Idaho.) The April event participants more closely reflected the demographics of state-wide elected official than the

population of the Treasure Valley or Idaho in general. This is a fairly common finding in evaluations of other Deliberative Polling and related citizen engagement processes.

Of interest to us is that 90% of you who received the briefing document viewed it *positively*. We interpret this to mean that the multi-discipline and multi-viewpoint approach to preparing the briefing paper achieved credibility among those with different energy option preferences.

Figure 2 shows who you believe should have primary responsibility for making energy policy decisions.

While your answers were divided, 38% of you said you prefer citizens to drive the decision making. This finding is not a surprise, and is consistent with Idaho's political and social culture where local decision making is seen as best, and collectively, we are strongly individualistic.

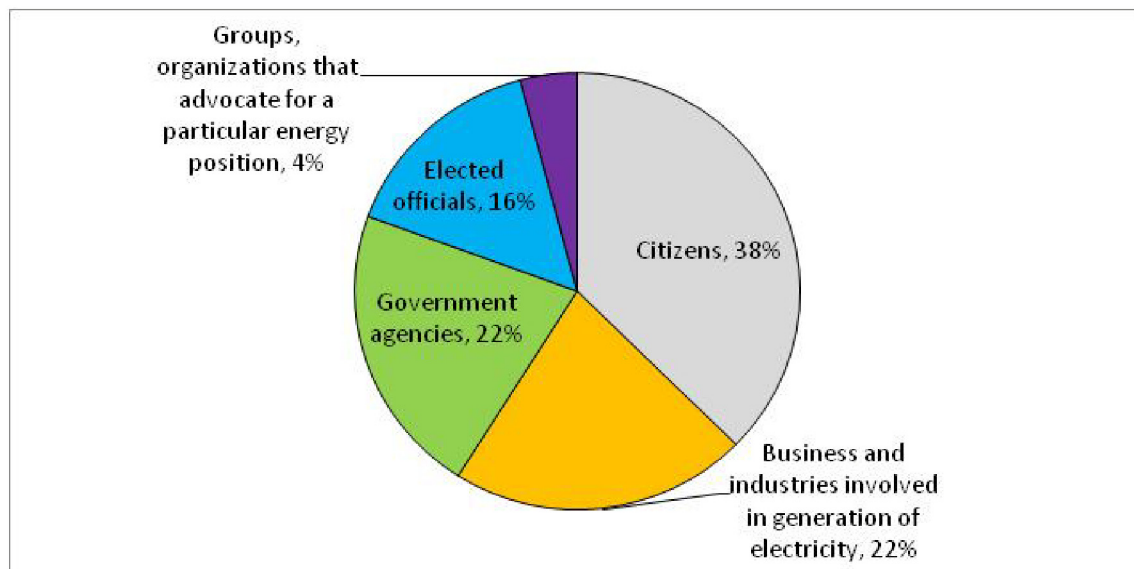


FIGURE 2. Energy policy decision should primarily be made by ...

Your preferences and level of support for the five energy options

We measured your preference and support for an energy option in three ways. The first measure, what we called '**reflective** preference' is a 'gut-level', 'off-the-top-of-the-head' preference. (Which do you prefer the most?) The next measure is '**support**', and this was measured by how you allocated \$100 across the various energy generation options. The third measure we took was '**formative** preference'.

This measure was different than the reflective preference since it required you to rate how important various factors were to you. These factors were combined in an algorithm to help us see, once you thought about the tradeoffs, what your preference would be. If you valued one factor more than another, this became more important (or weighed more heavily) in the algorithm.

As shown in Figure 2 below, the Renewable Energy option, and Conservation and Efficiency option had the strongest *reflective* preference of the five electricity generation options. The Fossil Fuel option had the least support.

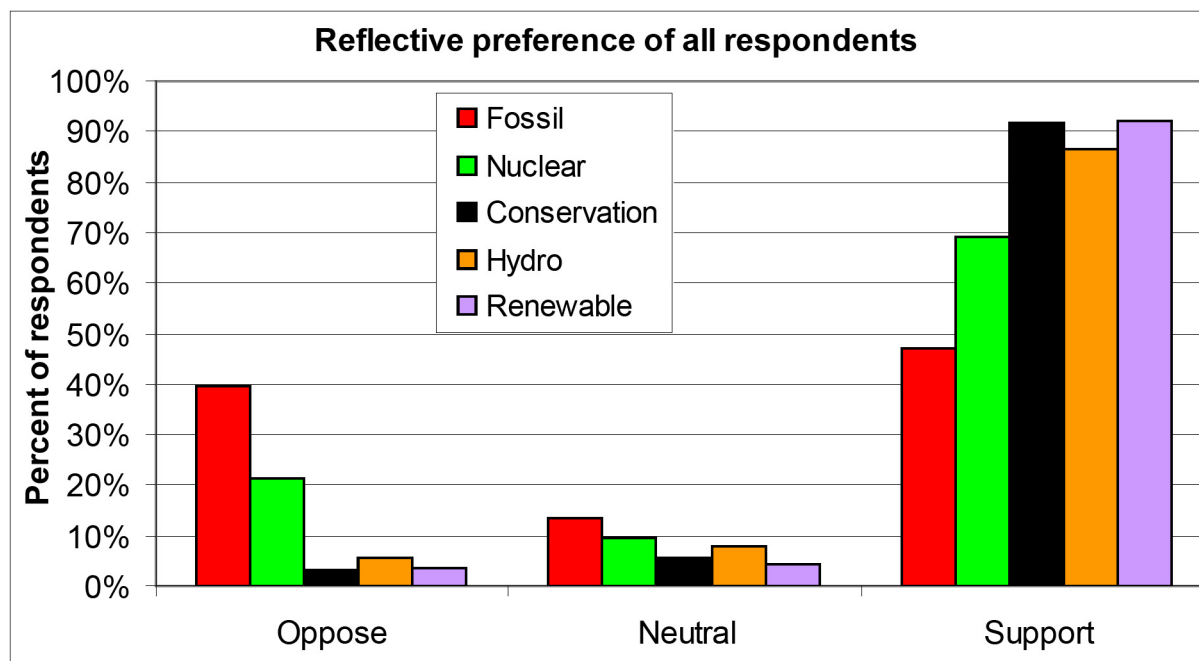


FIGURE 2. Summary of Reflective Preference for Electricity Generation

Ninety-two percent of you expressed positive preferences for renewable energy and conservation and efficiency. Hydropower garnered 87%, and nuclear energy 69%, with only 47% of you expressing a positive preference for fossil fuels. When we looked at how the answers (which ranged from -5 through +5) were distributed, we saw strong polarization for nuclear energy and fossil fuels. This means that “strongly support” and “strongly oppose” were the two most common answers.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the reflective preference scores. Most participants supported most options, with fossil fuels receiving the lowest support.

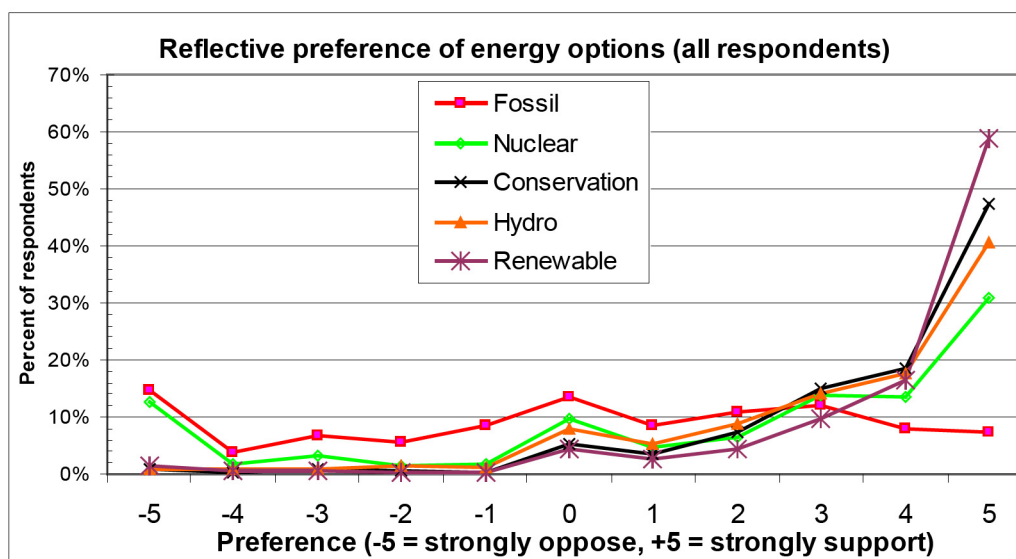


FIGURE 3. Distribution of reflective preference

Figure 4 shows the result for the question asking how the power company should allocate a hypothetical \$100 to buy energy to meet electricity demand. You could allocate your \$100 in any combination that totaled \$100. For instance, with five choices, an allocation of \$20 per option would indicate that the support was the same for each option. Nearly half of you would allocate no money for fossil fuels, and approximately one-third would allocate no money for nuclear energy. However, most of you put some money towards more than one option; only a few of you would fund just one type of electricity generation. Renewable energy and conservation and efficiency received the largest shares of your \$100.

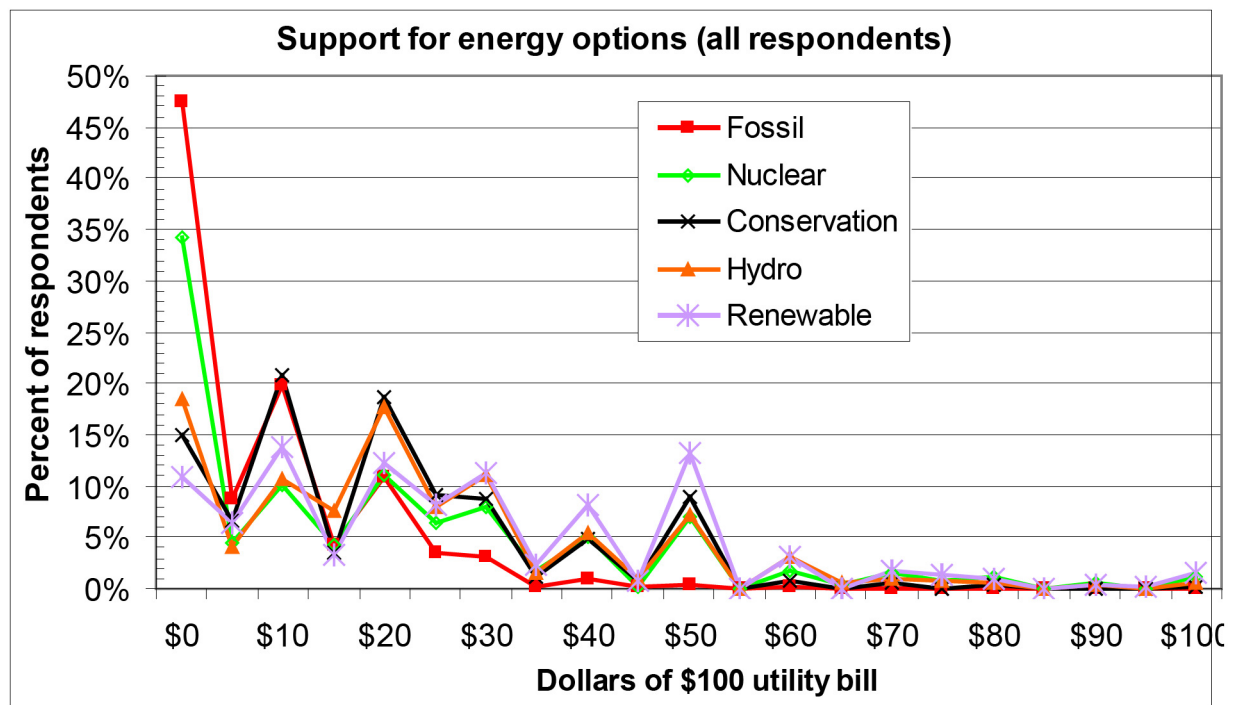


FIGURE 4. Percent of respondents supporting each energy option by allocation of \$100 utility bill

The third measure, **formative** preference, is a more complicated than the reflective preference measure. For this measure, we asked you to tell us how important eight ‘factors’ were for each electricity generation option. Figure 5 shows the model.

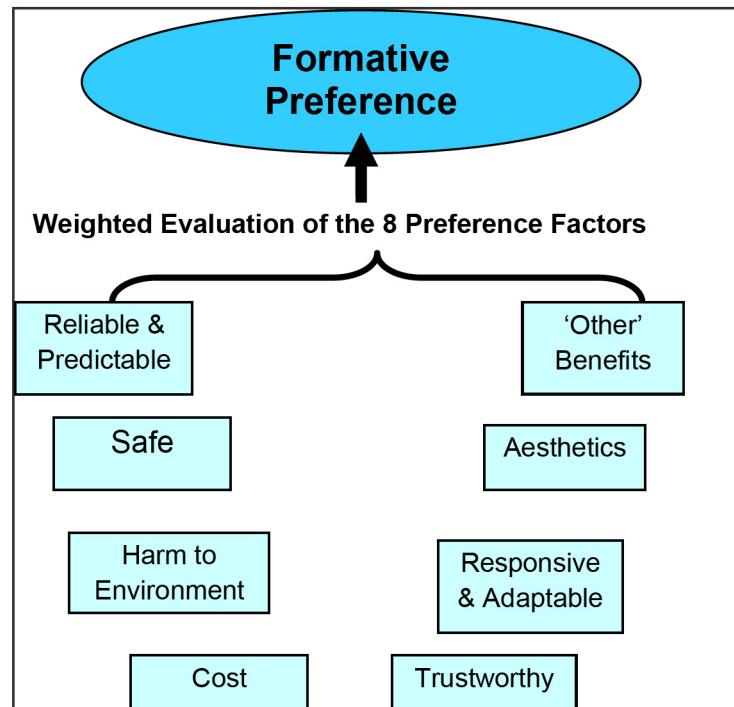


FIGURE 5. Formative Preference Model

After you rated all of the factors, we then 'weighted' all of the factors by importance by energy option. Figure 6 below shows the results.

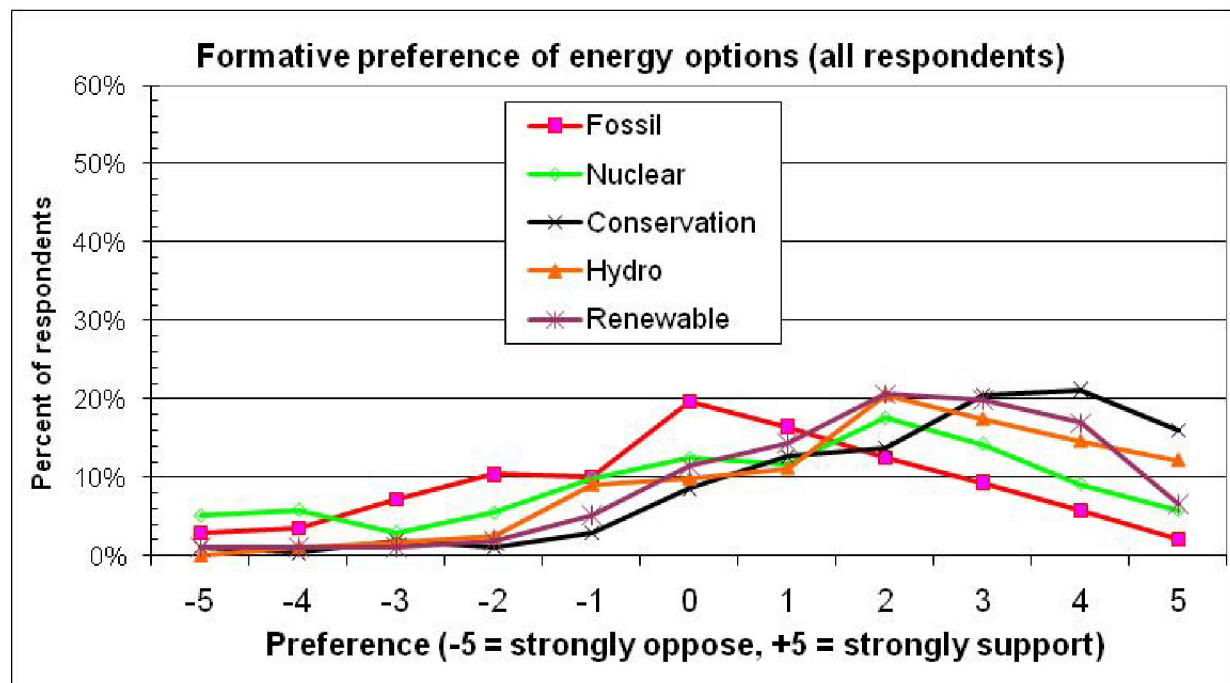


FIGURE 6. Distribution of formative preference

You can see in a comparison of Figure 4, the reflective preference, with Figure 6, the formative preferences, that there are differences in the 'shape' of the curves. When measuring the formative preference, you were giving more thoughtful consideration to what was important to you. (Of course, you may have chosen other factors to consider, but we chose that factors that seemed most relevant for the energy options in question. And, the survey could not include everything.)

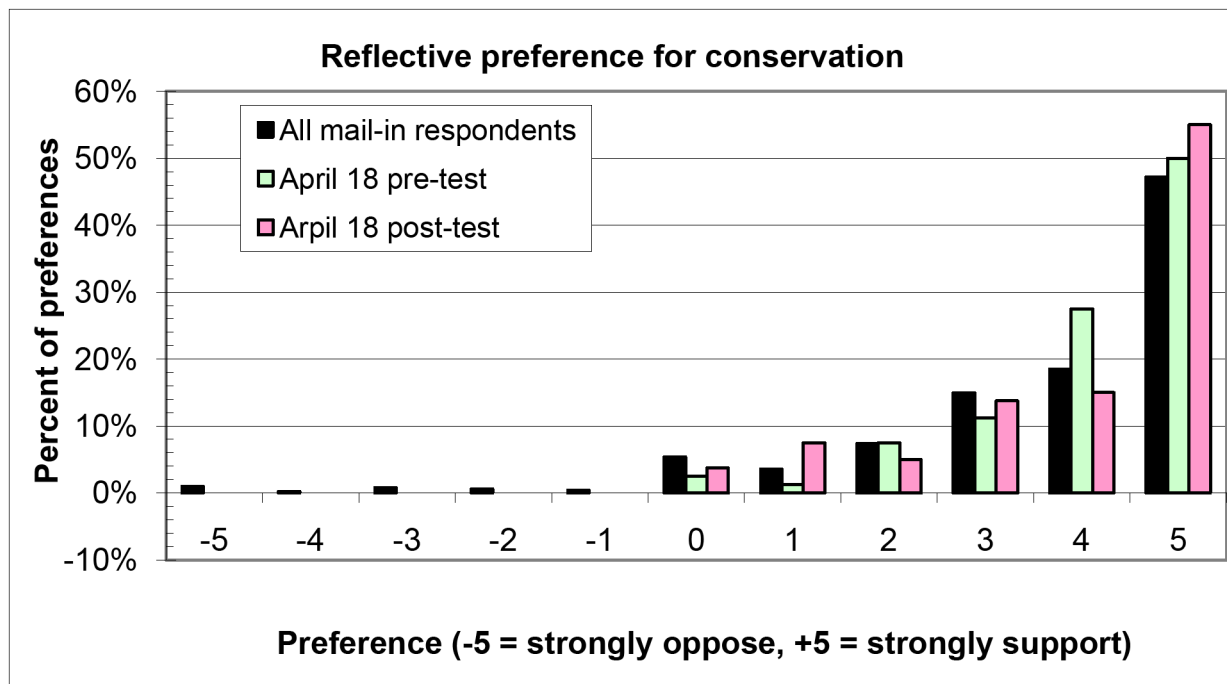
Results from the Deliberation Event

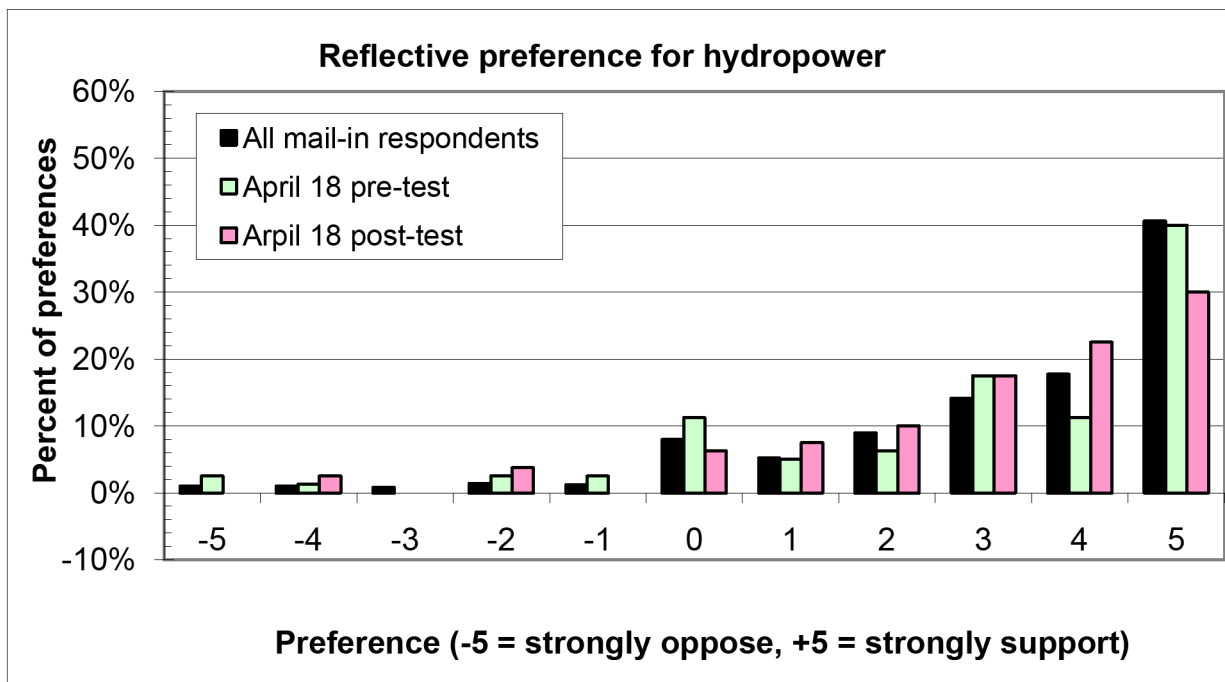
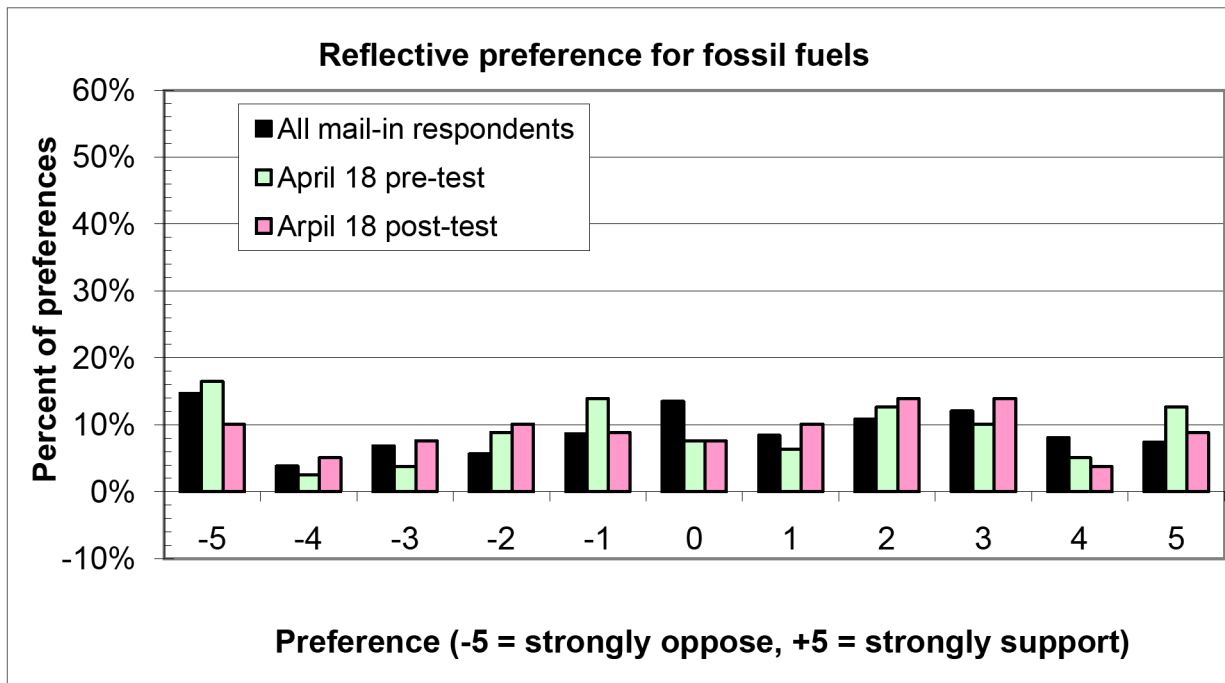
The effects of the treatments on your preferences and support for different energy options

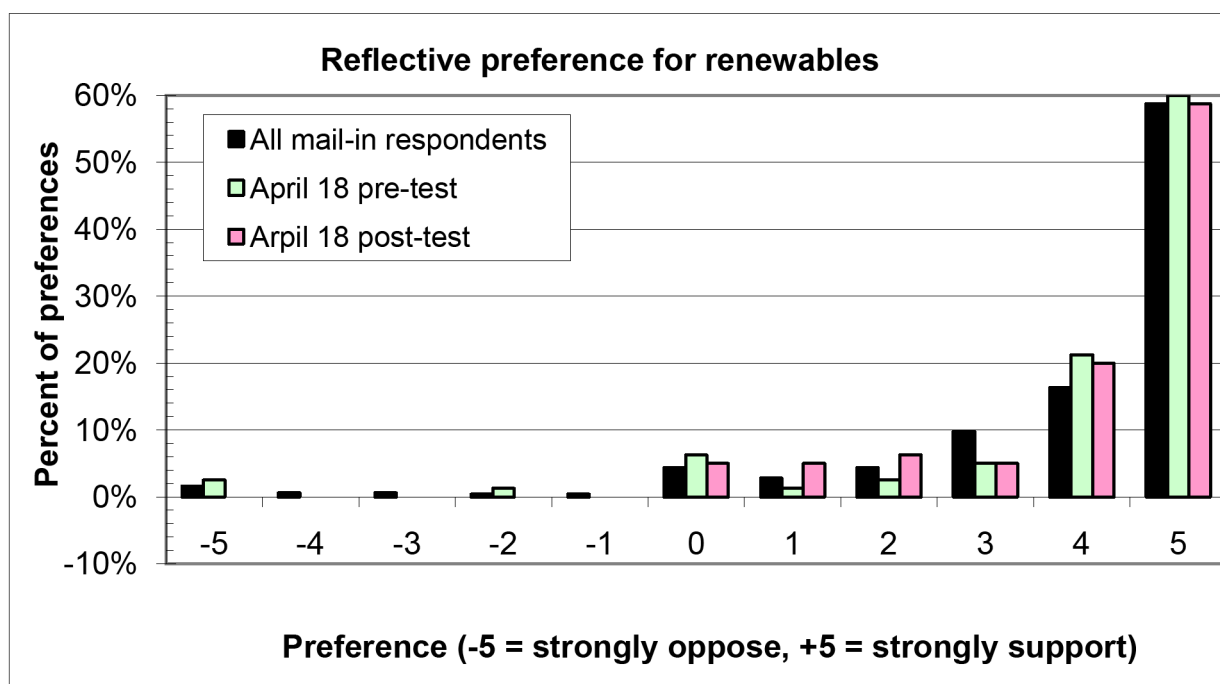
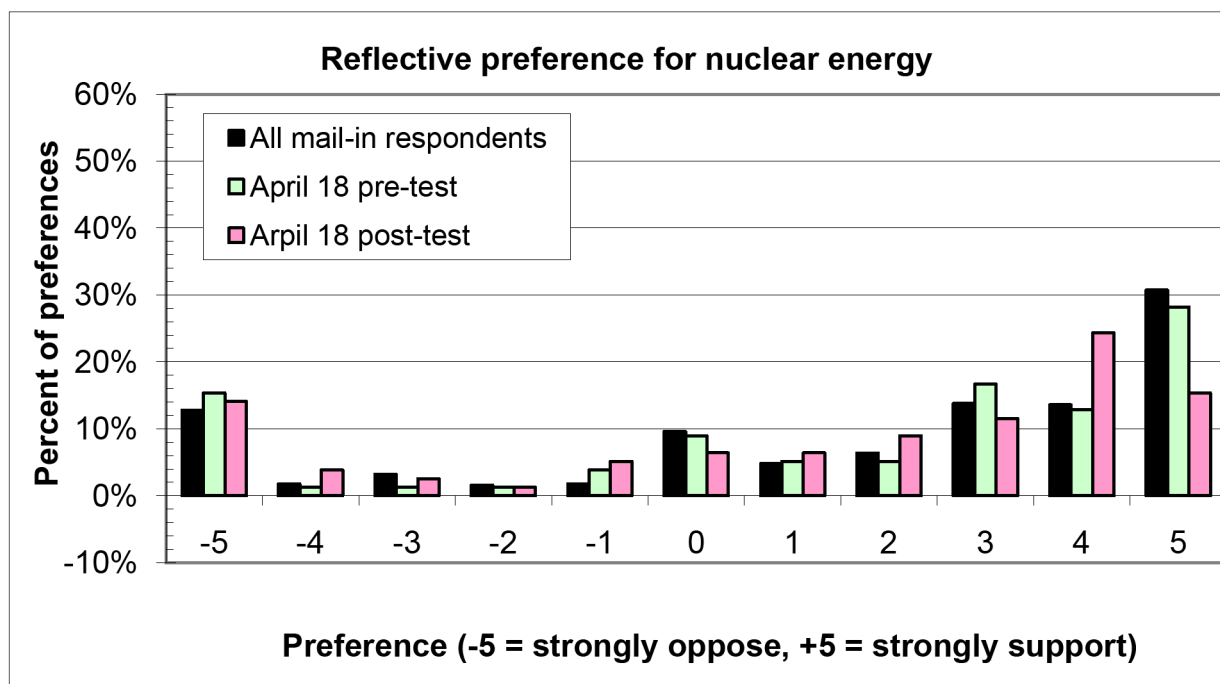
Those who participated on April 18, 2009 at the deliberation event were part of an experiment. We wanted to know if you would change your mind after experiencing one or more treatments. The treatments are described on pages 5 and 6. For example, after reading the briefing document, did you change your preference or support for one or more of the energy options? Did participating in more than one treatment appear to change your mind?

What we discovered is preferences changed very little, or not at all, between the first survey (the pre-survey) and the survey you took at the end of the day (the post-survey). When we looked at the results of all treatments together, there were three significant changes between the pre- to post-survey measures. 1. Support for fossil fuels and hydropower increased, and 2. support for renewable energy decreased, but 3. there were no significant changes in support for the other two options to meet electricity demand (i.e., nuclear energy and conservation and efficiency).

The following figures show the measure of reflective preference for the 504 survey responses (in black), what the event participants responded in the first survey (in green), and finally, what you event participants said in the post-survey at the end of the day.







Yes, there were changes from the first measure to the last measure. However, we could not associate the pre- to post-survey changes to any of the various treatments you experienced. For example, reading a briefing document, or participating in a small discussion group, or hearing the expert panel at noon did not have a unique effect on the average preference rating for all of you as a group.

Support for technical research or policy alternatives that could eliminate challenges or improve different options for meeting electricity demand

Another question on the surveys asked you to tell the government to allocate \$100 toward developing solutions to the challenges of each energy option. Figure 4 on page 9 shows the initial distribution of support (allocation of \$100 by your power company). Generally, the different treatments did not affect your support for funding ways to solve problems associated with electricity generation. Overall, support for funding solutions to nuclear energy increased slightly, and support for funding solutions to renewable energy went down.

All of these increases and decreases were marginal and did not correspond to any of the treatments you experienced. What this means is that there is no indication that changing the level or amount of engagement that policy decision makers have with you, the public, will have any effect on your willingness to support technical research or policy alternatives to improve the ways we meet electricity demand. This is important for policy decision makers, and the scientists and engineers who are looking for technological solutions.

Effect of the treatments, and level of preference and support measures, by intensity of opinion, psychological and demographic factors, social values, environmental factors, and other factors

We asked you to provide a variety of demographic information about yourself and your household. We also asked you about your political ideology and prior civic engagement. First, we wanted to know how representative you were of the general population of the Treasure Valley and Idaho. Secondly, we wanted to know if any of those common factors (age, gender, income, etc) would make a difference in how you preferred or supported any energy option.

As mentioned earlier, those of you who came to the event on April 18, 2009 were *not* representative of the population of the seven counties surveyed or of the general population of Idaho. And, your demographic and other factors showed no clear statistical pattern or effect on your preference or support for any of the energy options. These factors also did not influence your allocation of money to support ‘fixes’ to the challenges or problems of the energy options, or on your (negative) belief that technological or policy changes could be found to solve those problems.

The effect of the conference speakers (e.g., their knowledge, interaction styles, etc.) on your support for the energy options

The post-event survey taken at the end of the day asked you to evaluate the conference speakers on several dimensions, such as credibility, trustworthiness, and knowledge. We wanted to know if you might change your preferences or support, based on your assessment of those individuals.

We did not find evidence that the speakers (Michael Louis, John Freemuth, or the expert panel at lunch) changed your minds. However, our analysis shows that you came to the event with ‘strong prior attitudes’ about the ways to meet electricity demand. These strong prior attitudes clearly showed that some ways to meet electricity demand were more highly preferred (e.g., renewable energy and conservation and efficiency) than others (e.g. fossil fuels). You had these preferences before meeting the experts. Since we did find some significant correlations, a logical explanation is that you rated your regard for the panelist based on the extent to which that panelist agreed with you. That is, those of you who preferred renewable energy or conservation and efficiency prior to meeting the panelists ended up

saying you regarded the panelist(s) who shared their views as being more credible, trustworthy, knowledgeable, and likable.

It is not unusual for us human beings to listen most attentively or find the most compelling speakers to be those who share or reinforce what we already believe. However, it is also possible that if you were striving to be open-minded, you may have found some speakers' arguments compelling, which influenced your preference and support for energy options. We believe this deserves a deeper look by researchers in the future.

Changes in Knowledge

One of the primary measures used in the Deliberative Polling model is an analysis of change in factual knowledge about the topic before (pre-survey) and after (post-survey) the deliberation event. We asked you four questions to gauge your level of knowledge. The answers to these questions were in the briefing paper that some of you received. Interestingly, those of you who came to the event believed that you already had a great deal of knowledge about energy issues. And, we found that you actually were more knowledgeable than the general population. This supports our idea that those of you who agreed to come to the event did have strong prior knowledge and beliefs about energy options.

Table 1 is a summary of the self-reported level of knowledge about energy issues that were measured in the first survey (504 responses). For those of you that attended the deliberation event, you can see that you were more likely to say you were 'somewhat' or 'very' knowledgeable about energy issues, versus those who did not participate.

Table1: Summary of Self-Reported Level of Knowledge of Energy Issues

	Pre-survey (Mail-in) n = 398	Pre-survey Treatment Groups n = 75
I am very knowledgeable about energy issues	15%	24%
I am somewhat knowledgeable about energy issues.	70%	70%

When asked specific *factual* questions, those of you that attended the deliberation event chose the correct answer more often than the general survey respondents. You were also less likely to answer 'Don't know/not sure' to the knowledge questions than the general survey respondents.

Table 2: Summary of Knowledge Question Results

Knowledge Questions	All Pre-survey response (but did not come to event)	Pre-survey response (only those that came to the event)	Post-survey responses (only those that came to the event)
	n = 393	n = 67	n = 69
Within its borders, Idaho has abundant resources of which of the following? (correct answer is hydropower)	68% correct 8% incorrect 24 don't know	93% correct 7% incorrect 0 % don't know	99% correct 1% incorrect 0% don't know
	n = 401	n = 70	n = 81

Of the electricity that Idaho <i>consumes</i> , the majority comes from what one source? (correct answer is fossil fuels , the source of most of the electricity we import from out of state)	15% correct 85% incorrect 10% don't know	17% correct 83% incorrect 0% don't know	53% correct 47% incorrect 0% don't know
	n = 403	n = 72	n = 81
Of the electricity that Idaho <i>produces</i> , the majority comes from what one source? (correct answer is hydropower)	86% correct 3% incorrect 11% don't know	97% correct 3% incorrect 0% don't know	98% correct 2% incorrect 0% don't know
	n = 397	n = 64	n = 71
Which one of the following is the fastest to implement? (correct answer is conservation and efficiency)	44% correct 26% incorrect 30% don't know	72% correct 28% incorrect 0% don't know	82% correct 18% incorrect 0% don't know

If you came to the event, you did augment your knowledge in the areas of Idaho's energy production and consumption. Some of you corrected your misperceptions of the sources and potential solutions to energy issues. We measured a knowledge gain of 35 percentage points on the 'energy Idaho consumes' knowledge question, and 10 percentage points on the question about 'speed of implementation'.

Post Event Follow-up Study

Approximately 8 months after the April event we interviewed about half of you by phone to learn if there were any longer-term consequences of the event. In the discussion below, we provide excerpts from the interviews to illustrate what we found.

Twenty individuals (approximately half of you) said you had learned new information, but nevertheless did not shift your preferences for energy options in Idaho. While the survey findings showed that few of you exhibited large shifts in preferences, the interviews reveal that substantial learning did go on. This supports the notion that Deliberative Polling helps people develop more accurate knowledge about complex issues.

I think it expanded my knowledge to some degree. There were certain aspects of our energy policy, for example, the quantity of energy that we import into this state. The fact that we're opposed to coal fired plants in Idaho, yet we'll buy energy from coal fired plants across our border. I wasn't aware of that prior to that conference. In terms of changing my opinion, I don't think so.

I thought it was informative too. I wasn't aware of how much...actually that coal and the resources that provided power in the state... No, it didn't affect my opinions, but it did make me think a little bit more about what is out there. It didn't change my position any.

Well, yeah I'd have to say I learned some little things that you don't tend to think about. The wind power... the wind blows it... it's renewable... but the finer points that come up that you don't really think about that... yeah, we learned some things... Maybe it reinforced my feelings a little bit concerning wind power and hydroelectric and the renewable end of it. I think there are more options... more of availability than we're taking advantage of. It didn't change it as much as it reinforced it a little bit.

Many of you recognized that your opinions were well established and unshakeable prior to the event:

It made me aware that there's a lot of things going on in Idaho that I was not aware of. Like, the fact that we share all of our power with all the different states... I learned more stuff, but it didn't affect my outlook... I'm pretty stubborn.

Knowledge? I got some good knowledge out of it. My options or my thoughts on it, they will never change... I went in there with one track mind and left with a one track mind.

Twelve of you reported that you learned new information, and as a result, changed your attitudes toward one or more of the energy options. As evident in the following excerpts, people picked up on different bits of information:

I think the conference was excellent as far as getting... to increase my knowledge of the pros and cons of all the different options available to us... Maybe just safety as a nuclear power industry...The exposure to expenses on some of the non-renewables and conservation alternatives...Transmission lines and how that impacts energy costs... It increased my acceptance of nuclear power industries. I began to see that maybe it's a more viable alternative.

I learned some things. Particularly about the renewable energy sources. And, I think I came with much more of an impression that renewable energy sources are much more viable than I thought they were... It shifted me more towards that the renewable options are a lot more feasible than I thought. And that it should be something that we should be pursuing. I remain open to the idea of nuclear power options, but [now] I don't see that as the only solution.

I just had it in the back of my mind [before the deliberative poll] that because it [natural gas] was fossil fuel that it wasn't good. And I learned that it wasn't quite that cut and dry for me. I learned a lot... And, did it sway me? I think I had a real negative thought about certain fossil fuels for generation, like natural gas, that even though it's a fossil fuel... maybe it's not as bad as I thought it was.

[I learned] some advantages of some options less obvious than I thought...It reduced my support for hydroelectricity and increased my support for nuclear slightly. And reinforced my opinions about fossil fuels and my support for renewables...it increased my support for conservation.

I learned a few things at the conference... I learned from the meeting that we had here that one of the great advantages of gas fired electric generation is its versatility. We go into heavy load times... they're reluctant to jack up nuclear output or they don't have any water behind any dams that they can release or whatever... gas fired power plants come online. If I understood them correctly, a lot of these gas fired plants stand idle most of the time. And when peak loads come along, they can light them off in a very short time and pick up load with them. So I think that's a great plus... A question was asked at the luncheon down here by someone and it took me about 3 milliseconds to come up with the same answer that the panelists came up with. The question was: which form of power do you think will be the solution to this? And the answer was: all of them. I didn't have that feeling going in. I thought nuclear could do it all. And I walked out and thought, nuclear can't do it all, and neither can any of the rest of them.

Aside from the effects on specific knowledge or attitudes, eleven of you reported that the deliberative poll event had changed the way you think about energy, generally making you more aware of the complexities of the issues.

I think it made me realize what I don't know. And so then that makes you more curious about what's out there. You know, want to learn more about it.

Well, the way it affected my knowledge it is that I got to hear other people's views and opinions on it. My attitude...I think maybe it just allowed me instead of just kind of thinking one dimensionally for myself, you know I can see what other people are thinking... It would definitely...that would definitely changed my attitude because like I said, instead of just thinking about myself, I can think about other people.

I would say I came away with an overall positive feeling. But, it's a very complex problem that we are faced with. There's reasons I think that we should use nukes and there are reasons we should not use nukes. That's obvious. It's a trade off.

It very much opened up my mind to thinking about the need for options and of the need for information about all the options. It let me know that the issues were more complicated than I thought.

In going around with that group, I think we all came to the conclusion that we were all misinformed in some way or another... I think what I learned was some of the qualifications that stand in the way of any one of these things being "the solution." So in that sense, let's say I earned more respect for the arguments of others.

Discussion of Results

In general, you already had strong prior attitudes on energy and showed a clear preference for some ways to meet electricity demand over others. Moreover, your preferences changed very little, or not at all. Our treatments did very little to change your preferences for any one of the five energy options.

Individual elements of the Deliberative Poll, such as the briefing documents or small group deliberations, did not have much effect on your support for any particular option, or on your belief that negative outcomes can be resolved when looking for a technological or policy change. You did not change your opinions about funding solutions for producing solutions to the problems associated with each option.

You came to the event highly motivated. You listened attentively and actively participated. You were more highly educated than the general population, and demonstrated high levels of knowledge about energy issues in Idaho. However, the results suggest that you relied on prior values, beliefs, and opinions before and after the April 18, 2009 event. Or, you did not find a convincing reason to change your preferences or support for any option dramatically, based on our treatments.

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For the full final research report, go to:

<http://epi.boisestate.edu/research-initiatives/public-participation-and-public-attitudes.aspx>

- or -

<http://sspa.boisestate.edu/publicpolicycenter/publications/>

For more information about energy policy in Idaho, go to: <http://epi.boisestate.edu/>

For more information about CAES, go to: <http://epi.boisestate.edu/caes-partners.aspx>

