



Engagement and Participation

The role of citizen engagement in social research

Governments at all levels recognise the importance of consulting with and engaging their citizens in meaningful and constructive ways. They are beginning to appreciate that in order to capture the many complex challenges facing society today a 'new approach' to understanding community priorities is needed.

"The Government is examining ways in which Australians can increasingly deliberate in the making of government policy through a range of mechanisms, including community cabinets, as a part of a commitment to contemporary democracy."

Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia

Citizen engagement and participatory research reflects an understanding of the complexity inherent in the challenges facing our community. It recognises that the entire community has a role to play in generating ideas and shaping our direction as a society – whether we are members of the public (as citizens, service users and taxpayers), policy or key decision-makers, service providers, community organisations or other agents.

The Ipsos-Eureka approach

To us, people are not just 'respondents' – they are active players in the research and consultation process who bring unique perspectives and knowledge on issues. All research participants have a valuable contribution to make by generating ideas, decision-making and priority-setting in a meaningful and practical way.

Our approach centres on listening to all parties and understanding different perspectives. We give participants the time and resources they need to fully think through complex social issues, and working together to resolve conflict and form solutions that benefit society.

Participatory and deliberative research techniques

Participatory research emphasises the role of citizens as social agents and draws upon their knowledge and experiences in shaping decisions and policy direction. It uses new methodologies to capture participant data and groups that are often overlooked by traditional research. It aims to

arrive at shared solutions and to empower participants. Examples of participatory research include:

- deliberative events
- citizen's juries
- real-world exercises
- bifocal group discussions
- peer interviewing

Deliberative events are interactive workshops in which representatives of a community work intensively with researchers and clients on an issue. This process often combines elements of qualitative research, brainstorming and problem-solving. Led by a team of facilitators, it may involve large numbers of people from all walks of life. The length of the workshops allows for a deeper and richer exploration of issues than would otherwise be possible with conventional focus groups.

In August 2007, 67 residents of Sydney came together to discuss the role of government in their lives. Using a combination of group discussions, plenary sessions and interactive voting technology, the day explored key dimensions of value in public service, and current and future priorities for government.

Ipsos Australia, Global Cities Project

Real-world exercises put participants into situations which approximate 'real life'. They are encouraged to balance goals, priorities and preferences in a way that reflects the external world.

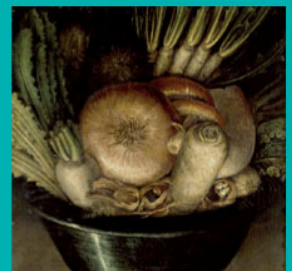
The aim is not simply to gather information about consumer preferences, but also to encourage a degree of empathy between participants and decision-makers.

Ipsos recently ran budget-setting workshops with members of the public. Citizens were given the role of 'councillors' where they chose between different spending priorities. This helped citizens to understand the complexities of government decision-making, while being a rich source of information to researchers.

Ipsos Brazil

Citizens' juries usually take place over 1-5 days, during which participants (or 'jurors') deliberate a specific question or issue. To help with their deliberations, they hear evidence from a variety of 'specialist witnesses' who present arguments on different sides of the debate. Jurors are given the time and resources to scrutinise information given to them before reaching a conclusion.

Up close we see certain details. But when we step back we discover something else.





Ipsos MORI in the UK run citizens' juries for the British Government across the UK to explore citizens' views on issues such as child safety, education, the media, crime and community health.

Bifocal group discussions – also known as two-way focus groups, these consist of two groups of participants: one from the consumer base, and one from the strategic planning areas of the research buyer. Each group has the opportunity to view a group discussion by the other, and then both groups are brought together to discuss the ideas generated by each of the groups.

Peer interviewing – members of the public are recruited to conduct research with people from their own community. This approach is particularly effective in conducting research with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, disenfranchised youth, drug addicts and the homeless.

Person-centred consultation

Adopting a person-centred approach to consumer consultation is especially important in health sector, aged care and disabilities research, where conventional research methods can unintentionally exclude people from taking part.

This means conducting research *on participants' terms*; at a time and place that suits *them*. While researchers are guided by general discussion points, there is a strong emphasis on empathic listening methods, and allowing participants to focus on what really matters to them.

Ipsos-Eureka recently completed a consumer consultation to inform the development of the Victorian Paediatric Rehabilitation Service, for the Department of Human Services Victoria. Over 60 in-home interviews were conducted, in which families described what mattered most to them in accessing and using services.

Other qualitative research techniques

Where appropriate and relevant, Ipsos uses a range of other research techniques, including conventional group discussions and depth interviews, ethnographic tools, and the unique Ipsos methodologies: Krisis™ and Mind & Mood™.

- **Krisis™** - is an innovative approach to qualitative research which deliberately creates (and thrives on) the conflict that is moderated in traditional focus groups. It

is used to 'shake up' thinking and to identify the hidden choices underlying behaviour.

- **The Mind & Mood™ methodology** – pioneered by renowned social researcher Hugh Mackay, the Mind and Mood™ methodology adopts a non-directive 'listening' approach to explore and understand social trends.

Measuring government service delivery

Our experience in citizen engagement and participation also includes quantitative research. Ipsos-Eureka leads the industry in the measurement of government service delivery. We have a principled and tested method of investigating both expectations and service performance, and thereby determining the separate drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

How we work

Ipsos prides itself on providing our clients with research of the highest quality. We work closely with clients to develop the best way to meet their business needs and to build lasting business relationships.

We also recognise the importance of 'giving back' to the citizens involved in our research and work with clients to find ways to communicate research findings and develop actionable and practical solutions.

Our portfolio leaders

Fiona Collis
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Fiona played a lead role in developing citizen engagement research at Ipsos-Eureka. With a 20 year career in social research, Fiona is highly skilled in a range of conventional and advanced qualitative and participatory research methodologies and techniques.

Ben Barnes
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With nearly 15 years experience in market and social research and evaluation, Ben has presented and published research in health psychology, the psychology of emotions, and market research methodology. Ben is QPMR-accredited and holds a BA Psychology (Hons).

Offices in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane

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