

The Party of the Undecided

*The Election Campaign for the 2008 General Election
as seen by the Italian people*

FACOLTÀ DI SCIENZE
DELLA COMUNICAZIONE



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

OSSERVATORIO MEDIAMONITOR POLITICA

Marzia Antenore, Gabriella Fazzi, Laura Iannelli

59th Annual ICA Conference - Chicago, Illinois USA
Session: Political Campaigns Around the World - May 22, 2009

Scenario

The 2008 General Election in Italy

- A climate of uncertainty
- A “restructured” political scene
- A defeat of the parties of the far left

Aims of research

- ⇒ To explore the phenomenon of political indecision and its relationship with media exposure and electoral choice
- ⇒ Particular reference to the voting behaviour declared by left-wing

Research method

- Quote sample
- Grid for homogeneous quotes of sex, age and location of interview



Structured questionnaires

(March 1st-10th, 2008)

- 2.427 cases in 5 towns
- 33%: undecided

In depth interviews

(March 15th-31st, 2008)

- 136 undecided
- Analysis of cultural consumption

Follow-up interviews by phone

(April 8th-10th, 2008)

- 99 undecided
- Few days before voting

General research question:

are the undecided “pragmatist” or “indifferent”?

Pragmatist undecided voter: a mature voter, who doesn't restrict himself to vote what he has always voted, but who wants to know, to understand, to decide attentively, revealing a constructive attitude

Indifferent undecided voter: he is not interested in politics, he approaches elections with a build-up of moods (mainly negative), he perceives the politicians' communication as a sort of steady background noise, tiresome, always the same

Political confidence

Political involvement

Statistical relations with political attitude and self-classification

		Index of confidence	Index of involvement
Not voting	Left-wing	-0,72	0,06
	Center	-0,69	-0,49
	Right-wing	-0,86	-0,40
	Don't self classified	-0,94	-0,92
	Total	-0,83 (N= 217)	-0,44 (N= 216)

Political confidence

Political involvement

In the words of undecided

⇒ The in depth interviews confirm that the Left-wing undecided voters are “indifferent” and far from politics

⇒ Exceptions:

- those who intend to abstain
- the radical left-wing voters who are now orientated towards the Democratic Party

Radical left-wing voters

who are now orientated towards the Democratic Party

- ⇒ Their indecision is much more **deeply-felt and aware** than in the case of the other interviewees.
- ⇒ They seem relatively **well-informed** about the Campaign, refer to questions of programme raised by the candidates and possess an ability to focus on the events of the Campaign.
- ⇒ These voters adhere faithfully to the model of “**monitoring citizen**” (Schudson 1998). In consequence they are the most tempted by the “**tactical vote**”.

Evaluations of the Election Campaign in the words of undecided

- ⇒ The **media** – in particular electoral television – are **accused** of reflecting a politics which is far from the problems of daily life
- ⇒ The undecided are immersed in multimedia, but are **uninterested in the Campaign**, “nauseated”, “disgusted”, “depressed”
- ⇒ Their accounts reveal especially “**impromptu**” **awareness and political competence** (almost-exclusive reference to the “campaign issues”)

For any questions...

www.mediamonitor-politica.it

laura.iannelli@uniroma1.it

gabriella.fazzi@gmail.com

marzia.antenore@uniss.it