



Online Poll / Online Voting

Aims to collect decisions from citizens on legislative questions, proposals, and inquiries from institutions through an easily accessible online voting system.



Information
Ideation
Consultation
Co-Decision



<15 people
15-30 people
30-100 people
100-250 people
> 250 people



Preparation:
1-6 months for tool set up, invitations etc.
Implementation:
1-6 weeks
Follow-up:
1-3 days for analysis and documentation



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Costs for tool, moderation etc.



At least two persons for preparation, moderation and documentation

The Method: What is it, when to use it and what outcome to expect

Online Poll or Online Voting asks citizens to express their decision(s) towards one or more questions of public interest in order to cast a democratic vote. Digital polling tools facilitate e.g. simultaneous, multiple choice and (un-)anonymous voting, vote delegation, regional access, commenting to make polling as customizable as needed.

Online Poll or Online Voting is feasible whenever alternatives are up for a decision, be it determination of citizen's advocacy on planned laws, neighborhood development projects or legislative proposals.

Online Poll or Online Voting uncover citizen sentiment, allow for wider, more inclusive participant reach and produce clear decisions towards raised questions and proposals while enabling democratic understanding and part-taking.

The Process: How to conduct it in an in-person setting or online using a PC/laptop with video option

The method follows three steps:

1. Preparation: Collect all necessary information for every presented alternative to set up the polling online. Decide for an appropriate polling tool or platform, a time span for citizens to vote, and a promotion strategy to reach citizens. Set up a point of contact for the voters. Hire or assign professionals to moderate the process if needed. Schedule in-person events before, during or after the voting time if desired. Test-run to eliminate errors.

2. Implementation: Decide whether to conduct a (virtual) kick-off event prior to the voting where the community can bring in their contributions, ask questions and receives background information on the topic. Launch and monitor the voting, compile interim analysis for stakeholders if needed. Answer questions that rise during the voting process.

3. Evaluation: Analyze the voting results, draw conclusions to the outcome, compile a report and share it with the voters, the interested public and to officials if desired.

Blended participation

If you want to connect this method to face-to-face format, have a look at the method "Dot Democracy". You can combine both methods to have an inclusive blended approach (digital and face-to-face)

Digital communication

- Make sure to mobilise people via various channels (incl. social media, messenger groups).
- Ensure that before, during and after the event, there is dedicated communications support.

Good to know

- Consider using digital participation platforms (e.g. Consul, Adhocracy, CitizenOS) instead of general digital polling tools for data security reasons and better fit for citizen polling projects (e.g. the possibility to reference a debate, upload video and text or whole citizen proposals, comment sections, avoidance of double votes)
- Consider using Online Polling/Voting before and/or after deliberative sessions (e.g. to find out about the reasons behind the votes)
- Be aware of the influence of wording as well as sampling errors prompting inaccurate, biased result
- Read further:
 - <https://participedia.net/method/4313>
 - <https://www.citizenlab.co/blog/civic-engagement/what-makes-a-good-online-citizen-participation-tool/>
 - <https://participedia.net/method/196>