

Empowering Voters through Better Information: Analysis of the Citizens' Initiative Review, 2010-2014

Report prepared for the Democracy Fund

by



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Acknowledgements

This ongoing research project has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the Kettering Foundation, The Democracy Fund, the University of Washington, Colorado State University, and the Pennsylvania State University. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of these foundations or universities. We again thank those acknowledged for their work on the 2010 and 2012 reports on the Citizens' Initiative Review, as well as those who assisted with the collection and analysis of data in 2014, including David Brinker, Robert Richards, and Jessica Kropczynski at Penn State, Kacey Bull, Kalie McMonagle, Krystina O'Neal, Cramer McGinty, Caroline Schmitz, and Jed Chalupa at Colorado State, Leah Sprain at the University of Colorado, Laura W. Black at Ohio University, Ekaterina Lukianova at Saint-Petersburg State University, Stephanie Bor at University of Colorado-Denver, Elizabeth Rosenzweig and the User Experience Center at Bentley University, MDC Research and DRM Research firms in Portland, Oregon, the Morrison Institute in Phoenix, Arizona, and Brenda Morrison (no relation) at Engaged Public in Denver, Colorado. Comments on design and analysis were also provided by Ned Crosby of the Jefferson Center for New Democratic Processes, Tyrone Reitman and Lucy Greenfield at Healthy Democracy, and the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review Commission.

Information on Citation

Citation of this report should be to Gastil, J., Knobloch, K. R., & Richards, R. (2015). *Building a More Informed Electorate: Analysis of the Citizens' Initiative Review, 2010-2014*. State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University. Available online at <http://sites.psu.edu/citizensinitiativereview>.

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Summary Evaluation of the Citizens' Initiative Review, 2010-2014

This one-page summary highlights key findings from a 2015 report by John Gastil, Katherine R. Knobloch, and Robert Richards, "Building a More Informed Electorate: Analysis of the Citizens' Initiative Review, 2010-2014," available online at <http://tinyurl.com/cironline>. Principal funding for this research came from the National Science Foundation. Our investigation examined the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) in Oregon from 2010-2014, as well as pilot projects conducted in 2014 in Jackson County, Oregon, Phoenix, Arizona, and statewide in Colorado. Our 2014 research included direct observation of the CIR panels, panelist surveys, detailed assessments of the Citizens' Statements, a usability study of the Statements, and phone, mail, and online survey analysis of the electorates who received each of the 2014 Statements.

CIR panels have achieved high-quality deliberation, even amidst continual process adjustments.

- The 2014 CIRs maintained the high level of deliberation obtained in 2010 and 2012, though reducing the panels from five days to four, coupled with numerous procedural adjustments, caused some inefficiencies and disruptions.
- The vast majority of 2014 participants reported learning enough about the measure to make an informed decision and rarely reported difficulty processing information, despite addressing issues of scientific complexity. SEE REPORT SECTION 1

CIR panels have produced strong, but not flawless, Citizens' Statements.

- Most of the claims made in the Citizens' Statements produced between 2010 and 2014 were accurate and verifiable, though a few statements contained a single (minor) error.
- Some redundancy appeared in the 2014 statements, especially regarding claims that were repeated in the Key Findings and in the Arguments in Favor and Opposition.
- Citizens' Statements were clearly written but at times used language that may not be accessible to a substantial portion of voters. SEE REPORT SECTION 2

Citizens' Statements consistently make voters better informed about ballot measures

- On every CIR studied since 2010, reading the Statement has produced increases in voter knowledge about the ballot measure.
- Averaging across all five 2014 CIRs, the net effect of reading a Citizens' Statement is greater than the difference in voter knowledge between those with high school educations versus college degrees. SEE REPORT SECTION 4

Citizens' Statements reached even more voters in 2014, though most Oregonians did not read them.

- Statewide surveys of Oregon voters found that 54% of those likely to vote were aware of the CIR by the end of the 2014 election, compared to 52% in 2010 and 40% in 2012.
- Overall, more than one-third (36%) of Oregon voters read the Citizens' Statements before completing their ballots, compared to roughly one-quarter in 2012. SEE REPORT SECTION 3

Voters find the Citizens' Statements helpful but want to know more about the CIR process.

- A majority (56-58%) of 2014 Oregon Statement readers found them at least somewhat useful, and higher percentages (63-67%) rated them as at least somewhat informative.
- Usability testing, however, suggests that voters believe they need to know more about the CIR if they are to place more trust in the Citizens' Statements. SEE REPORT SECTION 3

Introduction

This report provides an overall assessment of the quality of deliberation that took place during the 2014 Citizens' Initiative Reviews, as well as the quality, utility, and impact of the resultant Citizens' Statements those reviews produced.¹ We focus on the 2014 CIR process but make reference to earlier findings from our reports that assessed the 2010 and 2012 Oregon reviews.

The Oregon legislature created the Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) in 2009 to help voters make informed choices on statewide ballot measures. After convening two CIRs in 2010, the Oregon legislature made this process a regular institution in 2011 and has convened two CIR panels in each subsequent initiative election.

Healthy Democracy, which has convened every CIR thus far, held three other pilot CIRs in 2014, in an Oregon county, Colorado, and Arizona. For each CIR panel, Healthy Democracy convenes a stratified random sample of 19-24 registered voters for 4-5 days to study and deliberate on a specific ballot measure. Citizen panelists hear from both sides of the issue, talk with neutral witnesses, and deliberate intensively as a full panel and in small groups, then write a one-page analysis for distribution to the wider electorate (via official Voters' Pamphlets, in Oregon's case).

Our research method for studying the CIR in 2014 included direct observation of the panels, surveys of the citizen panelists, detailed assessments of the Citizens' Statements, a usability study of the Statements, and phone, mail, and online survey analysis of the electorates who received each of the 2014 Statements. (See Appendix C for details.) This paralleled the methods used in our evaluations from 2010 and 2012. We will frequently make reference to those earlier CIR panels, and those who wish to learn more about them are directed to the two previous CIR reports produced by this research team.

The nine CIRs held over the past five years have covered a wide range of issues, from mandatory sentencing to genetically modified organisms. Our report refers to each of these different CIRs, which Table I.1 summarizes in relation to their respective electoral contexts.

Table I.1 Basic descriptions of nine Citizens' Initiative Review panels, 2010-2014

Year	Location	Election	Ballot Measure	Subject	Election Results	Panel Vote
2010	Salem, OR	OR general	Measure 73	Sentencing	57% FOR	AGAINST (21-3)
			Measure 74	Marijuana	56% AGAINST	FOR (13-11)
2012	Portland, OR	OR general	Measure 85	Kicker	60% FOR	FOR (19-5)
			Measure 82	Casinos	71% AGAINST	AGAINST (17-7)
2014	Medford, OR	Jackson Cty.	Measure 15-119	GMO seeds	66% FOR	none taken
	Salem, OR	OR general	Measure 90	Top 2 primary	68% AGAINST	AGAINST (14-5)
			Measure 92	GMO labels	51% AGAINST	AGAINST (11-9)
	Denver, CO	CO general	Proposition 105	GMO labels	66% AGAINST	FOR (11-9)
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix	Proposition 487	Pensions	57% AGAINST	none taken	

Note. "GMO" refers to genetically modified organisms.

¹ In this report, the phrases "Citizens' Statements" and "CIR Statements" are used interchangeably.

Summary Assessment of CIR

The most straightforward assessment of the CIR concerns its impact on voter knowledge. The survey data we collected shows that CIR panels have a consistent effect on voters' issue-relevant knowledge—an impact that has been noted in the 2010 and 2012 reports and which gets even more attention in Section 4 of this report. The quality of information provided in the CIR Citizens' Statements is the primary reason that Oregon voters have turned to the CIR when seeking to learn about ballot measures. Section 3 summarizes how voters use and assess the CIRs, and that section provides additional insight into how voters in Colorado and Phoenix, Arizona think about a potential CIR process coming to their states.²

Before looking at impacts, however, our report begins by assessing the CIR process itself, in Section 1 of this report. That section assesses the CIR in terms of the rigor of its issue analysis, the civility and democratic quality of its deliberations, and the quality of the final statement produced by the CIR panels' decision making process. We provide a thorough assessment of the 2014 CIRs in Section 1 of this report and offer a detailed report card in Appendix B, but Table I.2 summarizes those evaluations in terms of overall letter grades that compare 2014 with previous years.

The typical CIR process gets an A- for its deliberation, with some performing better than others but none (so far) earning straight As on these evaluations. As for the Statements produced by CIR panels, the typical grade is a B+. Section 2 of this report shows that CIR panels have produced accurate and substantive Citizens' Statements, which earns the documents good grades. Nevertheless, a challenge in producing a one-page guide on ballot measures is explaining the facts and key arguments in a way that is maximally useful for a voter who has not had the chance to study the issue as closely as the panelists.

² One naïve way to judge the CIR's success would be asking whether its implementation has changed electoral outcomes directly. More often than not, CIR panels have voted in the same direction that the general public ultimately voted, though the 2010 CIR on mandatory sentencing stands as a stark exception. In that case, the CIR voted 21-3 against a popular measure. Even though our 2010 report concluded that reading the CIR Statement likely eroded support for that measure, it still passed by a comfortable margin. It remains impossible, however, to demonstrate definitively a CIR Statement's ultimate electoral impact, given the complex indirect effects it can have during an election and the influence of other forces, such as shifting campaign spending and advertising. Nonetheless, the 2014 GMO (genetically modified organisms) food labeling issue in Oregon (Measure 92) failed by a narrow margin, with 50.5% of voters opposing it. The result was similar to the corresponding CIR panel's 11-9 vote against, and the CIR may have been a deciding factor in the election's outcome. In a case such as this, the important detail is not the narrow split in the CIR panel's vote but, rather, the substance of the CIR Statement.

Table I.2 Summary evaluations of CIR process and statements, 2010-2014

Year	Ballot Measure	Rigorous Issue Analysis	Civil and Democratic Process	Quality of Citizens' Statement
2010	Mandatory sentencing (Oregon M73)	B+	A-	A-
	Medical marijuana (Oregon M74)	B+	A-	A
2012	Non-tribal casinos (Oregon M82)	A-	B+	B+
	Corporate "kicker" (Oregon M85)	A-	A	A
2014	GMO seeds (Jackson County, Oregon M15-119)	B+	B+	B+
	Open primaries (Oregon M90)	A-	A-	B+
	GMO labeling (Oregon M92)	B	A-	B+
	GMO labeling (Colorado Prop 105)	A-	A-	B+
	Pension reform (Phoenix, Arizona Prop 487)	A-	A	A-
Modal grade from 2010-2014		A-	A-	B+

CIR Variations and Recommendations

The final section of our report will provide suggestions for how to improve Citizens' Statements, and it will provide numerous other suggestions for refining the CIR process, ensuring its timely impact on voter knowledge, and furthering the larger CIR research effort. The sheer number of recommendations in Section 5 reflects the fact that much has been learned about the CIR since 2010, and these insights generate new ideas for future CIRs. Many of the recommendations from the 2010 and 2012 reports were put into practice by Healthy Democracy, an organization that has kept itself—and its CIR panels—open to scrutiny.

This adaptive quality of Healthy Democracy has meant that the CIR has changed over the years, but those changes have been driven by both a desire to refine the CIR and a practical need to make the CIR as cost-effective as possible. That drive led to some of the design variations examined in Section 1 of this report. In particular, a contraction of the total duration of CIR panels led to some process challenges.³ Likewise, the CIR experimented with producing Citizens' Statements that did not contain panel votes, a choice that was shaped, in part, by the preference of some project partners, such as the Morrison Institute in Arizona.

The intent of this report is as much to assess previous CIRs as to provide guidance to those who would implement future CIRs, whether continuing the legislatively established CIR process in Oregon, replicating it in another state, or adapting the basic design principles of the CIR to other contexts, be they local, county, statewide, or even national elections—or, for that matter, any situation in which a large group of people would benefit from reading the distilled insights of a smaller body of their peers.

³ We had hypothesized this problem in our 2014 NSF grant application, a document that Healthy Democracy read and responded to in the way it executed the CIR this past year.

Overview of the 2014 Reviews

Many of those reading this report may already be familiar with the CIRs held in 2010 and 2012, and those who wish to learn more about those can read detailed assessments in our previous reports.⁴ Few readers, though, know the details of the 2014 reviews, and we close this introductory section with an overview of those, starting with notes about how they differed from previous implementations of the CIR process.

In 2014, Healthy Democracy received a matching grant from the Democracy Fund to expand the CIR's reach. In addition to two statewide processes in Oregon, Healthy Democracy worked with local organizations to conduct test processes in Jackson County, Oregon, Colorado, and Phoenix, Arizona. 2014 also brought significant structural changes to the CIR, in particular, the reduction of the process from five days to four days, the downsizing of the panel from 24 participants to 20 participants, and the elimination of background witnesses. Below, we provide an outline of the 2014 agenda and a brief overview of the individual reviews.

All of the 2014 CIRs followed the same basic process design. Each panel met for four consecutive days and heard from advocates in favor of and opposed to the measure. At the end of their deliberations, the panelists had created a list of findings relevant to the measure and then used these findings to craft their Citizens' Statements. The basic agenda was as follows:

- Day 1: Orientation to CIR and the ballot measure
- Day 2: Identification of questions for advocates and expert panel 1
- Day 3: Expert panels 2 and 3 and identification of additional findings
- Day 4: Key Findings prioritization and development of arguments in favor of and opposed to the measure

Though each panel followed roughly the same agenda, modifications were made to the structure based on the success of previous agenda segments and the needs of the panel. For example, though the panelists heard primarily from advocates in favor of and opposed to the measure, a few of the reviews contained one panel with a neutral witness. In addition, the method for distributing the Citizens' Statement varied by location. The statewide Oregon reviews were the only ones to have their statements appear in the voters' pamphlet. The other reviews distributed their statements through websites, direct mail, and media coverage.

The process also saw significant structural modifications from previous years. The format for developing and voting on the sections of the Citizens' Statements saw a number of process modifications. Rather than independently developing findings and arguments for the statement, as had been done in years past, participants began deliberations with a set of claims developed by advocates and largely worked to prioritize and edit these claims for inclusion in the Citizens' Statement. Moreover, this year multiple reviews studied similar measures in different locations, and, for the first time, advocates appeared at multiple reviews. Process modifications and developments such as these and their effects on the overall quality of the deliberations will be discussed in the next sections, but first, we provide details on each of the reviews.

⁴ See Gastil and Knobloch (2010) and Knobloch, Gastil, Richards, and Feller (2013).

Jackson County, Oregon – Measure 15-119

The Jackson County, Oregon review took place during April 27-30 in Medford, Oregon and reviewed Jackson County Measure 15-119, which would have banned the growth of genetically modified organisms in that county. Healthy Democracy organized and conducted the review with 20 Jackson County voters with facilitation by local professionals.⁵ This review constituted the first review of a local, rather than a statewide, ballot measure. Because of this, panelists were generally not provided with housing or dinner, and the review cost considerably less to conduct. In addition, this review was the first to test the new process design, including the shortened length, fewer panelists, the elimination of neutral background witnesses, and moderation of all small group sessions. The Jackson County Citizens' Statement was disseminated via Healthy Democracy's website and the local media, though many voters likely were exposed to the review through a survey conducted by our research team. (The survey will be discussed in a later section of this report.) Unlike the other statements written previously—but like the statement written by the Phoenix, Arizona CIR panel later in 2014—the Jackson County Statement did not include the number of panelists who voted for or against the initiative.⁶

Oregon – Measures 90 and 92

Healthy Democracy conducted two statewide initiative reviews in 2014. The first panel met during August 17-20 and reviewed Measure 90, which would have allowed voters to select one candidate for office in an open primary, and then the top two candidates would advance to the general election, regardless of their party affiliation. The second panel met during August 21-24 and reviewed Measure 92, which would have required food manufacturers and retailers to label packaged foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients. Both reviews were conducted in Salem, Oregon, the state's capital. The CIR Commission oversaw the process, determining which measures to study, and facilitators from the 2010 and 2012 processes moderated. This CIR followed the same basic agenda as the Jackson County review, though not all small groups were facilitated for Measure 90. This CIR was, however, the first review to host advocates who had previously appeared at a CIR, with advocates both in favor of and against the GMO ban in Jackson County speaking to the panelists reviewing the statewide GMO labeling measure. The Citizens' Statement was distributed via the state's voters' pamphlet and returned to the format of including the number of panelists who voted for and against the measure.

Colorado – Proposition 105

The Colorado CIR was the first review to be held outside of the state of Oregon. To conduct this review, Healthy Democracy partnered with local civic engagement organizations Engaged Public and The Civic Canopy. Meeting space was provided by the University of Colorado-Denver. Twenty Colorado voters met during September 7-10 and reviewed Proposition 105, which would have required raw or processed foods containing genetically modified organisms to bear the label "produced with genetic engineering." This marks the first time that the CIR had covered the same issue, GMO labeling, in two different states. Advocates who had appeared at the Jackson County GMO ban and Oregon GMO labeling reviews again appeared at the Colorado review. The Citizens' Statement was distributed via Healthy Democracy and Engaged Public's web sites and saw relatively high levels of media coverage, including stories by local television stations, newspapers, and public radio.

⁵ The Jefferson Center received a large contract from Healthy Democracy to manage this project, and its entire staff worked on it. Larry Pennings assisted Tyrone Reitman with drafting the process design.

⁶ Though it was not included in the Citizens' Statement, a vote count for and against Measure 15-119 was taken among the panelists, and its balance (14-6 in favor) paralleled the ultimate tally for Jackson County voters (66% in favor).

Phoenix, Arizona – Proposition 487

The Phoenix CIR represented the first review of a city-wide measure. For this review, Healthy Democracy partnered with the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University for logistical and organizational assistance, though they brought in facilitators from Oregon who had run previous statewide CIRs.⁷ Twenty participants met during September 18-21 and reviewed Proposition 487, which would have changed the city's employee retirement plan from a defined benefit system into a 401k contribution plan and would have placed limits on increases in current pension plans. Unlike previous CIRs, whose participants had been demographically stratified to match the voting population, the Phoenix CIR selected participants who were demographically stratified to match the entire Phoenix population in order to create a more representative panel (though only registered voters were selected to participate). The Morrison Institute worked very closely with groups for and against Proposition 487 to develop the initial set of claims. As with Jackson County, the Phoenix statement did not include the number of panelists voting in favor of or in opposition to the measure.⁸ The Citizens' Statement was distributed via Healthy Democracy and the Morrison Institute's web sites and direct mail and covered by some local media outlets.

⁷ The terms "facilitator" and "moderator" are commonly used in conjunction with the CIR process, and in this report, they are synonyms.

⁸ The final panel vote was 11-8 against, which was close to the 57% of the final ballots against the measure.

Section 1. CIR Process Design and Deliberative Quality

To assess the quality of the CIR's deliberative process, we applied the same evaluative scheme used in 2010 and 2012.⁹ In particular, we were interested in understanding whether the CIR provided opportunities for analytic rigor, sustained a democratic group process, and resulted in informed and egalitarian decision making. Such features are essential to any deliberative democratic process, including the CIR.¹⁰

For each review, a team of two or three researchers sat in on the process, taking notes and engaging in real-time coding of the deliberative quality of each agenda segment. In addition, participants at each review completed daily and end-of-review evaluations that asked them to assess their overall satisfaction with the process and its performance according to several criteria.

In this section, we detail how the 2014 CIR process performed on each of these criteria. We also examine how design variations, from 2010 to 2014 and across the 2014 forums, affected the CIR panelists' deliberations, their overall satisfaction, and the Citizens' Statements they produced.¹¹ In addition to evaluating the CIR, we also developed concrete recommendations for how to improve the process, but we save all such recommendations for Section 5.

1.1 Overall Satisfaction

Before addressing the specific criteria, we begin by reporting on CIR panelist satisfaction. At the end of each review, panelists are asked to rate their "overall satisfaction with the CIR process." When looking at the reviews across years (Figure 1.1), we see a slight drop off in satisfaction between 2010 and 2012 but relative stability in overall levels of satisfaction between 2012 and 2014.¹²

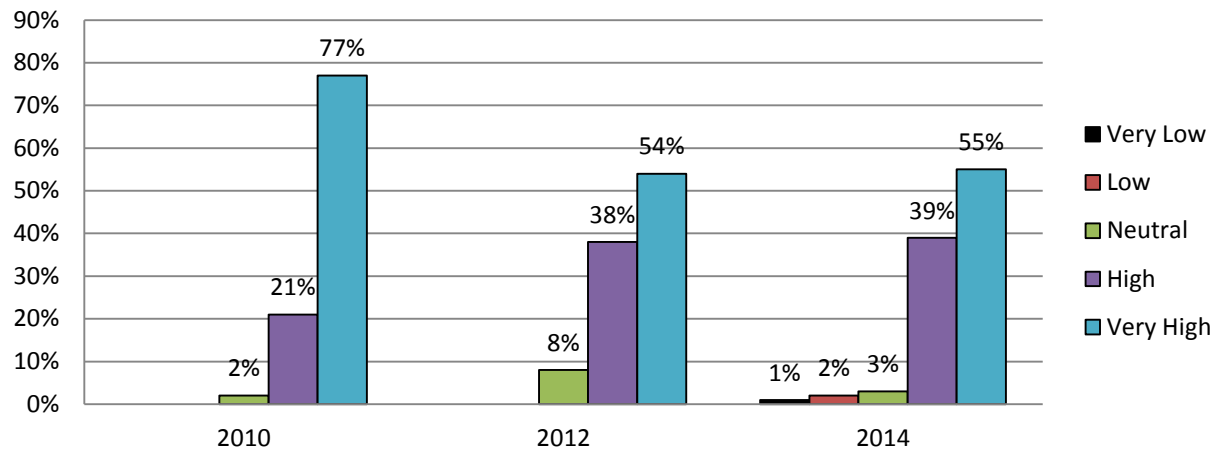
Looking at the levels of satisfaction across reviews in 2014 provides more insight into how process changes may have affected panelist satisfaction. Table 1.2 shows steady increases in process satisfaction as the reviews progressed. In particular, panelist satisfaction saw a distinct increase, from high satisfaction at the first one (Jackson County) to very high satisfaction at the last (Phoenix). This increase in satisfaction shows that the process design saw improvements as minor changes were made from review to review based on successful or problematic agenda segments in previous reviews. Specific design changes that may have led to this steady increase in satisfaction will be discussed in more detail below.

⁹ Gastil and Knobloch (2010); Knobloch, Gastil, Richards, and Feller (2012). The rationale for this evaluation scheme is presented in Gastil, Knobloch, and Kelly (2012).

¹⁰ Gastil (2008). More generally, see Nabatchi et al. (2012). For a comparison with another comprehensive report on a deliberative process in Australia, see Carson et al. (2013).

¹¹ Appendix C provides a sample of the participant evaluations and Appendix B provides a report card for each of the processes, from 2010-2014. This report card provides a quick overview of how each process performed according to the deliberative criteria, though a detailed discussion of the reviews is provided below.

¹² Results stem from daily and end-of-review evaluations that all participants completed between 2010 and 2014. All evaluations had a 100% response rate (2010 $N = 48$, 2012 $N = 48$, 2014 $N = 99$). The slight decrease in satisfaction from 2010-2012 could have many possible explanations, among them procedural difficulties with one of the 2012 CIR sessions (on casinos) and possibly the fact that the 2012 CIR was less novel than its predecessor (i.e., the 2010 panels had the benefit of being the first ones).

Figure 1.1 Panelists' overall satisfaction with the process, 2010-2014

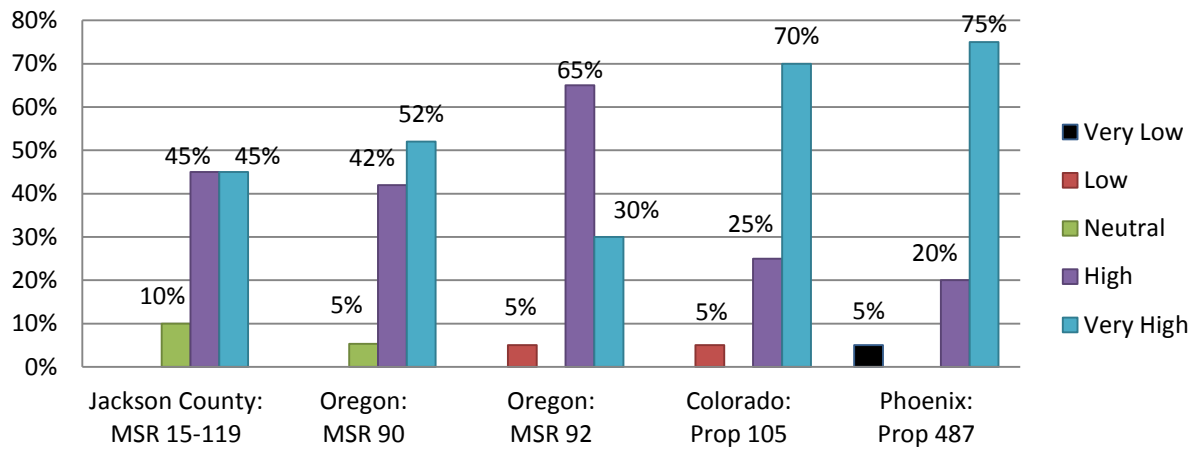
The marked departure from the trend towards increased satisfaction in Table 1.2 appears for Oregon Measure 92, in which panelists reviewed GMO labeling. Four interrelated issues may have led to decreased levels of satisfaction at this review:

- process designers and moderators altered the agenda as the review progressed, and there were deviations from the agenda owing to facilitator error;¹³
- panelists were often confused about the agenda and continually questioned the moderators about the purpose of tasks and how they would relate to future tasks;
- the process for developing the statement was particularly unclear for panelists, who expressed frustration with a lack of ability to edit parts of the statement once they were developed; and
- panelists were often pressed for time to complete tasks, particularly when engaging in statement writing.

Each of these problems, and their effect on the Citizens' Statement, will be discussed in more detail below, but the lower levels of satisfaction for the Oregon Measure 92 CIR underscores the need for a relatively stable process design in which panelists (a) clearly understand how process elements relate to one another and (b) have ample opportunity to write and edit their Citizens' Statement.

¹³ In preparing this report, we have solicited feedback from Tyrone Reitman and Lucy Greenfield of Healthy Democracy, and we have taken their views into account in editing this report. Occasionally, we reference their comments directly in these footnotes. For instance, regarding the current discussion, from the perspective of Healthy Democracy the errors committed by facilitators were the principal problem in 2014. As the year progressed, Healthy Democracy tried to revise their own procedures to reduce the potential for facilitator deviations from process guidelines. Such errors or confusions were not unique to 2014, as facilitators had erred in their interpretation or adaptation of the CIR process as early as the first panel. This evaluation, however, focuses more on the actual process that unfolded during the course of the CIR, as opposed to the process design that Healthy Democracy had devised.

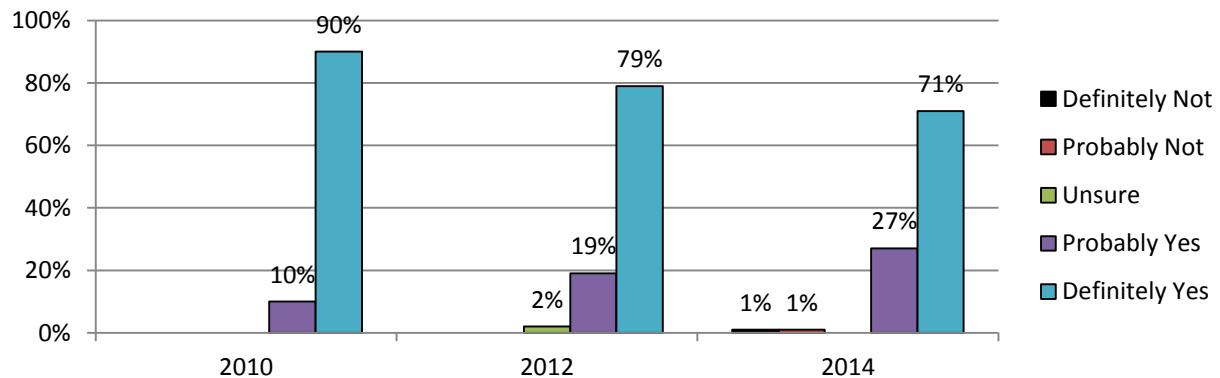
Figure 1.2 Panelists' overall satisfaction with the process, 2014



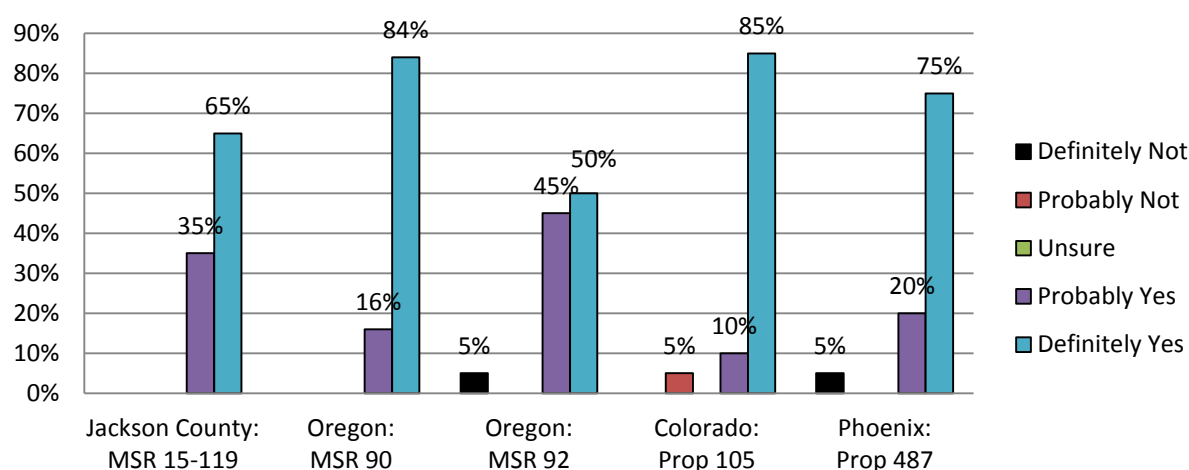
1.2 Analytic Rigor

A minimal test of a CIR process' analytic rigor is whether the panelists believed that, by the end of the week, they adequately understood the initiative they had studied. To assess this, the final panelist survey asked if they had learned enough to reach a good decision. Figure 1.3 presents the results aggregated for 2010, 2012, and 2014. This graphic indicates a slight decline from 2010 to 2014, though virtually all panelists said that they either probably or definitely learned enough to reach a good decision. Even so, 2014 represents the first year that any panelists (roughly 2%) felt that they had not learned enough by the end of their deliberations.

Figure 1.3 Panelists' assessment of having learned enough to make a good decision, 2010-2014



As Figure 1.4 indicates, one reason for this may be the increased complexity of the initiatives in 2014. The 2014 reviews asked panelists to weigh in on highly complex initiatives, including the labeling of genetically modified foods and pension reform. The scientific and economic details of these issues may be one reason that some panelists left the CIR believing that could not fully grasp the measure.

Figure 1.4 Panelists' assessment of having learned enough to make a good decision, 2014

A second reason for the lower levels of understanding in 2014 may be the exclusion of neutral witnesses. One of the biggest changes between 2010-2012 versus 2014 was the absence of neutral or non-advocate background witnesses.¹⁴ During the first two years of CIR panels, background witnesses often performed a number of important roles, such as verifying or debunking the claims of advocates or offering new sources of information. Other times, it was helpful for panelists to hear a neutral witness state that it was too difficult to predict with precision a policy's outcomes, such as the impact an initiative may have on the budget or public health. These witnesses helped panelists sift through the information provided by advocates. Without their presence, some panelists may have had difficulty resolving competing claims made by the pro and con advocates.

Weighing Information

Another measure of analytic rigor asked the CIR panelists to rate the process' performance at weighing information for and against the measure. Aside from the aforementioned decline from 2010 to 2012, Figure 1.5 shows that satisfaction on this dimension appears relatively stable between 2012 and 2014. Although the process design saw several major changes in how the panelists sifted through initiative-related information, many of these changes balanced one another in their effect on this criterion.

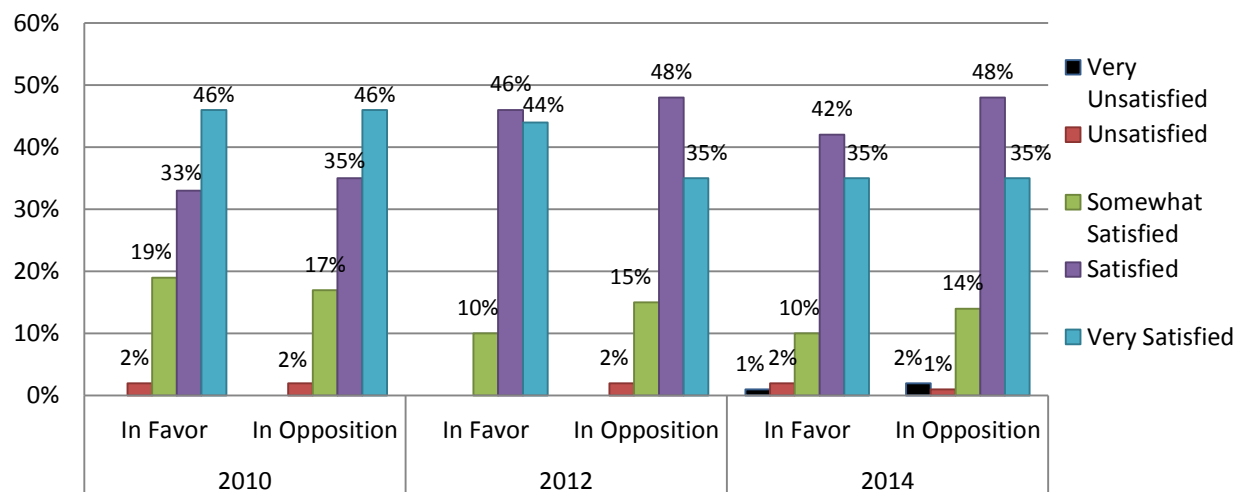
One such change for 2014 was the way that information was conveyed to the panelists. In 2014, panelists heard from advocates during three panels: The first generally addressed why the measure was on the ballot, the second what was in the measure, and the third what potential impacts the measure may have. On the morning of day two, panelists formulated questions to ask during the three panels and then on the afternoon of day two and during day three the advocates in favor of and opposed to the measure responded to those questions and additional questions posed by the panelists.

This process change had a number of consequences. The first was largely positive: Because advocates from both sides sat on the same panel, they could respond directly to claims made by the other advocate teams. This allowed them to challenge claims in real time and enabled the panelists to see how the advocates responded to each other's arguments. The 2010 and 2012 processes did not provide

¹⁴ The use of neutral witnesses is more than a matter of design preference. Identifying, recruiting, and selecting these experts is a significant expense for program staff, and pro and con advocates sometimes question the neutrality or relevance of such witnesses.

such back-and-forth discussion opportunities for the advocates, and this change likely allowed the panelists to better weigh competing arguments against one another.

Figure 1.5 Panelists' satisfaction with the process weighing of information, 2010-2014



Another process change that likely helped panelists weigh competing arguments was an initial exercise that focused on pairing competing claims. At the beginning of the process, panelists were presented with a list of claims, generally developed by the advocates.¹⁵ When first introduced to this list, the panelists were asked to identify competing claims by looking to both the pro and con claims and finding points of contention. They then used these points of contention to develop the questions for advocates. By encouraging the panelists to look at the claims in comparison to one another, this design element allowed them to better identify factual and values-based disagreements that needed clarification and then gave them the opportunity to raise those points of contention in their questions for the advocates.

Even so, not all of the process changes related to the advocate panels were quite so positive. Because the panelists developed their questions before hearing from the advocates, their questions sometimes became redundant. For example, advocates from the first panel would at times in the course of their presentations provide answers to questions intended for the second or third panels. The second and third panels, however, would still be charged with answering the originally posed questions, which occupied the time that could have been used for questions that arose as panelists began to learn more about the measure.

Finally, one thing that remained relatively static from 2010 to 2014 was the presentations by the advocates. In general, we find that the advocates often have a hard time speaking to the panelists' level of expertise. In short, advocates generally speak to a highly informed audience of other experts or advocates or a relatively uninformed audience of the general public, the latter usually through commercials or sound bites that give little opportunity to explore initiative-related information in depth. The CIR panelists represent a unique population. Spending four to five days learning about the initiative, they become much more informed than the average voter, though they still do not have the level of issue-relevant information held by advocates and experts. Advocates tend to have trouble navigating

¹⁵ In Phoenix, these claims were developed by the Morrison Institute in conjunction with pro and con advocates.

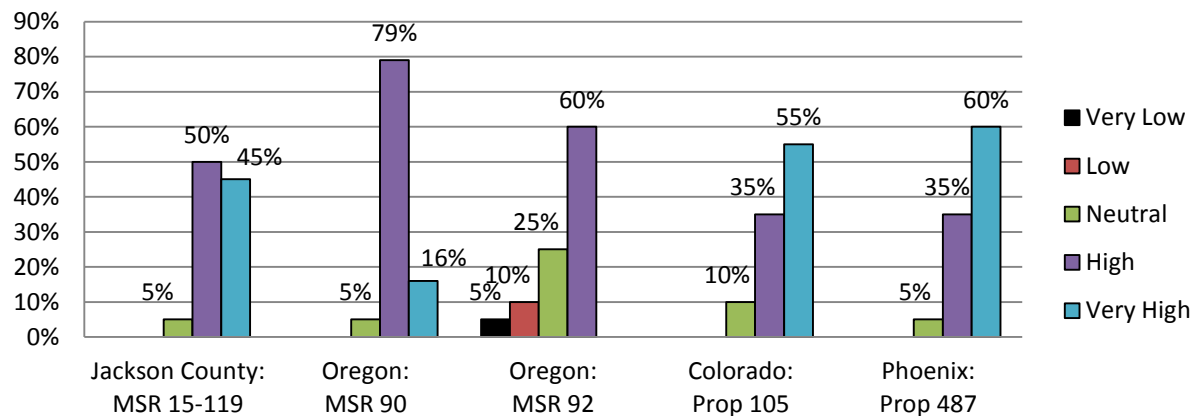
this middle ground, speaking to panelists either as average voters—and therefore not providing enough in-depth analysis—or as experts—using jargon or terminology with which the panelists are unfamiliar.

This trend was particularly salient for the GMO reviews. Some of the advocates from both sides attended more than one of the GMO-related reviews, yet the advocates varied their presentations little from review to review. One would expect the advocates to learn from the experience of the process and adapt their presentations based on what worked or didn't work in previous reviews. Instead, the advocates offered much of the same testimony across reviews and did not necessarily alter the level of information for panelists who, by the end of the process, become quasi-experts on the issue.

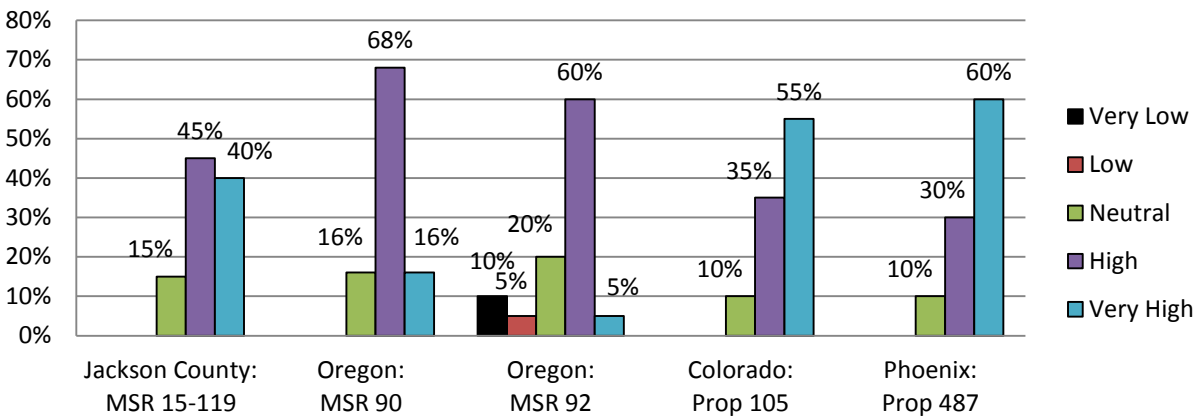
The results across 2014, in Figures 1.6 and 1.7, generally indicate a steady increase in satisfaction along this criterion as the year progressed, with the exception of Measure 92. Though most panelists are either highly or very highly satisfied with the process' performance in weighing the information in favor and opposed to the measure, panelists for Measure 92 show a noticeable decline in this regard, with no panelists saying they were highly satisfied with weighing the information in favor and only one panelist being highly satisfied with weighing the information in opposition.

Again, this may be due to the process instability and the panelists' lack of understanding about the purpose of some of the agenda segments. During both small- and large-group discussions, the panelists would often stray from the task, asking moderators about the purpose of the agenda segment, arguing that they should be using their time differently, or, unclear about the assigned task, discussing initiative-related information but not necessarily performing the required task, such as identifying reliable information from panel sessions.¹⁶ Each of these diversions would detract from panelists' time to sift through the information provided by the advocates.

Figure 1.6 Panelists' satisfaction with weighing information in favor of the measure, 2014



¹⁶ Healthy Democracy also noted in reviewing this report that the pro advocates on this issue had difficulty addressing the questions put to them by panelists. Such difficulty has been seen in each of the years of the CIR, when pro or con advocates come to the CIR unprepared for sustained deliberation. We address this in our recommendations, as we have done in previous years, but ultimately the preparation of advocates depends on their own willingness to take the time to learn the CIR process.

Figure 1.7 Panelists' satisfaction with weighing information in opposition to the measure, 2014

In addition to the decline in satisfaction along this criterion for Measure 92, the other Oregon initiative, Measure 90, also had relatively low levels of satisfaction on this criterion (though the vast majority of panelists still reported being highly satisfied with the process' performance in weighing information). One reason for the decline on this criterion, particularly in relation to the panelists' generally high level of process satisfaction, may be the lack of small group facilitators. Measure 90 was the only process in which some of the small groups were not facilitated.

In 2010 and 2012, only the first two small group sessions were facilitated. Panelists were then instructed to self-facilitate and selected a fellow panelist to serve as the moderator for the small group. Wary that this may prevent deliberative discussion in the small group portion of the process, Healthy Democracy initially attempted to correct this problem in 2014. At the first review in Jackson County, all of the small groups were facilitated, but this often resulted in spending too much time voting and not enough time talking. (This will be discussed in further detail below.) Seeking to rectify this problem, Healthy Democracy originally decided to forgo small group facilitation at the Oregon statewide CIRs.

Unfortunately, without the presence of small group moderators, dominant members of some groups overwhelmed the conversation and thereby stifled in-depth issue discussion and disagreement. Noticing the problem, small group moderators were reintegrated by the end of the process (and were included in the remaining reviews) but well after much of the discussion of claims and identification of reliable information had been completed. The absence of the moderators, then, may have limited some of the panelists' sense that they had had an adequate opportunity to fully discuss initiative-related information, thus lowering their satisfaction in this regard.

Weighing Values

Turning to whether the process gave ample opportunity for the consideration of underlying values, most panelists are again either highly satisfied or very satisfied with the processes' performance (Figures 1.8 and 1.9). This high level of satisfaction likely stems from two design features, the presentations by the advocates and the small- and large-group deliberations. Because the panelists spend several hours hearing presentations by and interacting with the advocates, they have the opportunity to understand the underlying reasons why the advocates support or oppose the initiative. The advocates often rely on personal stories or narratives when discussing the initiative, explaining why values such as health or environmental protection may be important to decisions about GMOs or why diversity of choice or higher participation rates may be important to consider when deciding on open primaries. Panelists

then have an opportunity to sift through these competing values when engaging in small- and large-group discussions and when prioritizing the advocate claims.

Figure 1.8 Panelists' satisfaction with considering values in favor of the measure, 2014

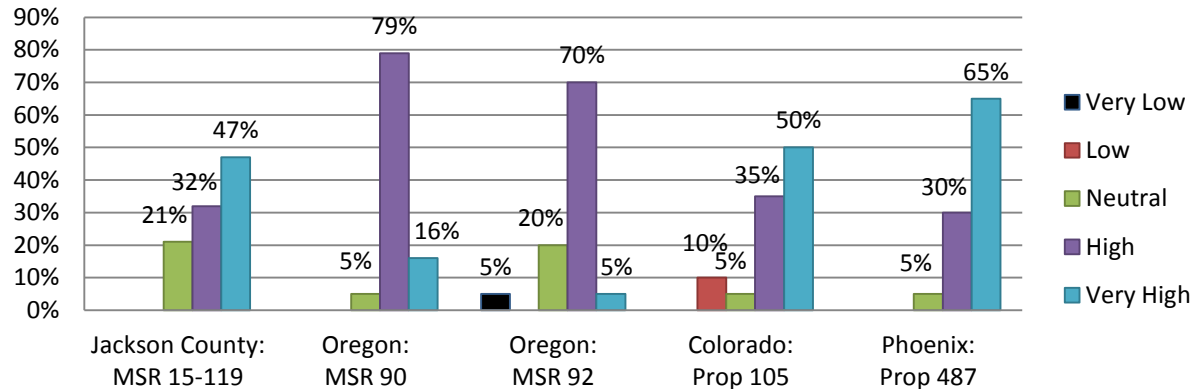
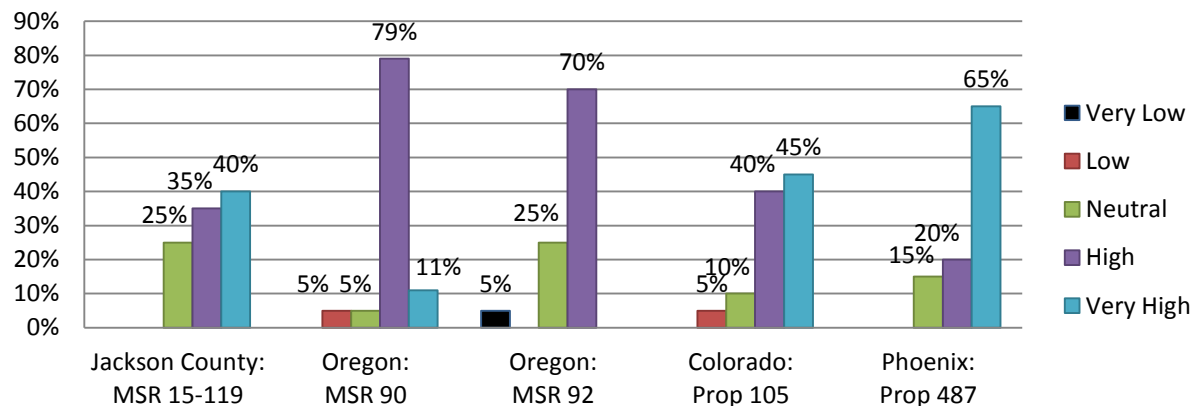


Figure 1.9 Panelists' satisfaction with considering values in opposition to the measure, 2014



The importance of small and large group deliberations is reiterated when looking to the results across the 2014 CIRs. The two CIRs with the lowest levels of satisfaction in this regard are the Jackson County and Oregon GMO labeling reviews. During both of these reviews, panelists spent less time engaged in deliberation. In Jackson County, the reduced time for deliberation was largely due to the task-oriented nature of small group facilitation. During small groups in Jackson County, the facilitators would often encourage panelists to move quickly through voting processes in which they prioritized the advocate claims. This often came at the expense of time for deliberations. At the Oregon GMO labeling review, panelists often spent deliberation time talking about the structure of the process itself and attempting to clarify the purpose of the agenda segment. This, too, reduced the time available for deliberation and likely prevented the panelists from thoroughly discussing underlying values.

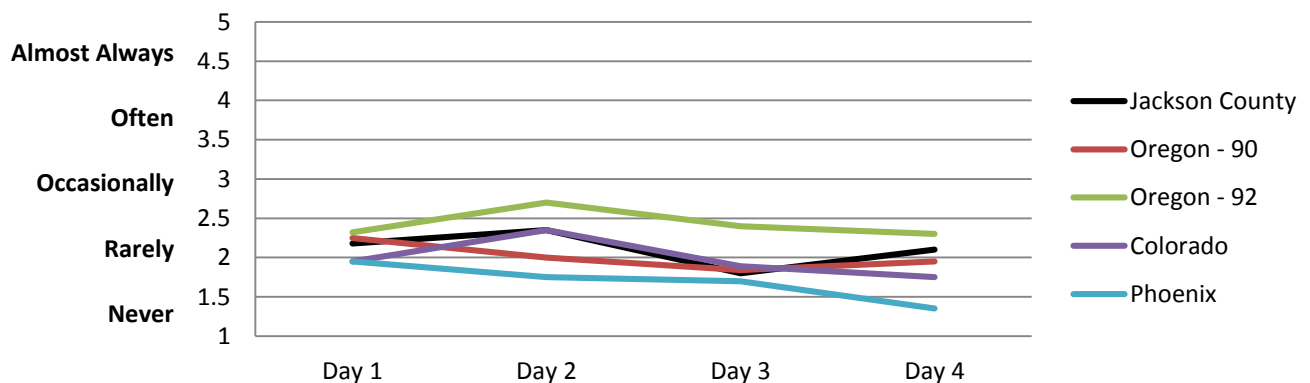
Following the Discussion

Our last measure of analytic rigor asks whether panelists had difficulty following the discussion. At the end of each day, we asked panelists how often they had had “trouble understanding or following the

discussion today” on a scale from “Never” to “Almost Always.” Figure 1.10 presents the results across the 2014 CIRs.

In general, we find that though the majority of panelists reported rarely or never having trouble following the conversation, those that studied the GMO measures had more trouble on Day 2, when they first began to study the measure in-depth. This may be expected for scientifically complex issues, as panelists were often tasked with understanding how GMO products were created and their potential effects on health, the environment, and the economy.¹⁷ Still, it is promising to note that even when faced with issues of such scientific complexity, most panelists on most days reported that they at least adequately understood the discussions taking place. Again, the success on this measure is likely due to the extended opportunity to hear from and question the advocates and to discuss those presentations in small group sessions. As the review progressed beyond day two, most panelists reported a decline in difficulty following the conversation, indicating that panelists tended to better understand the measure and related issues as the reviews progressed.

Figure 1.10 Panelist reports of difficulty following the discussion, 2014



1.3 Democratic Process

In assessing the democratic quality of the discussion, we look for relatively equal speaking opportunities across the panelists, mutual comprehension of one another, and signs of thoughtful consideration of each other’s arguments amidst a respectful group climate.¹⁸ The CIR generally performs well in this regard, both across years and across 2014 reviews. Panelists rarely report evidence of bias in the reviews, either from the moderators or in the amount of time provided for both sides. When panelists do report feelings of bias, they almost always balance one another out, with panelists reporting a sense of bias on both sides.

Neutral Facilitation

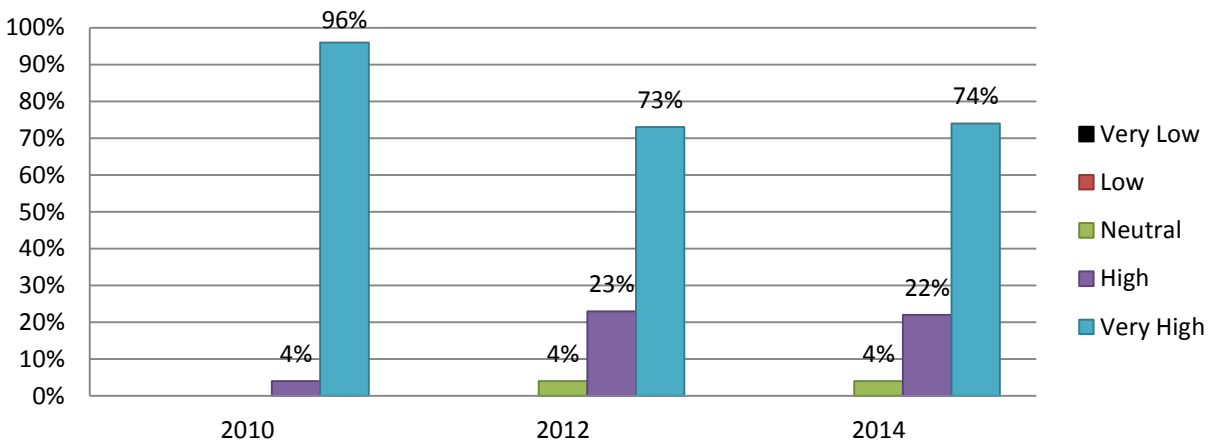
Figure 1.11 provides a summary measure of the panelists’ sense of bias. At the end of the review, panelists are asked, “One of the aims of this process is to have the staff conduct the Citizens’ Initiative

¹⁷ From the perspective of Healthy Democracy, the panelists’ confusion can also be attributed to poor presentation of evidence by the advocates. Juries suffer from the same problem when expert testimony or judicial instructions are not presented effectively during trial; see Vidmar and Hans (2007).

¹⁸ Gastil (2014) stresses these as essential features of democratic small groups of all varieties.

Review in an unbiased way. How satisfied are you in this regard?” Almost all panelists from all reviews reported high or very high satisfaction along this criterion and no panelist has ever reported low or very low satisfaction along this measure by the end of the review.

Figure 1.11 Panelists’ satisfaction with goal of conducting an unbiased process, 2010-2014



Several factors likely contribute to this. The moderators facilitated all large group discussion in 2010 and 2012 and additionally moderated the majority of small group sessions in 2014. Moreover, the moderators maintain strict neutrality during the process and are careful to avoid interjecting their own opinions on the measure or showing favoritism in their language or the amount of time given to either side. Moderators neither ask panelists to consider information that they themselves do not raise nor play devil’s advocate if groups tend toward agreement. This style of moderation is particularly well suited to the CIR, where the maintenance of neutrality and the absence of bias are crucial to the long term viability of the process.

Equality of Speaking Opportunities

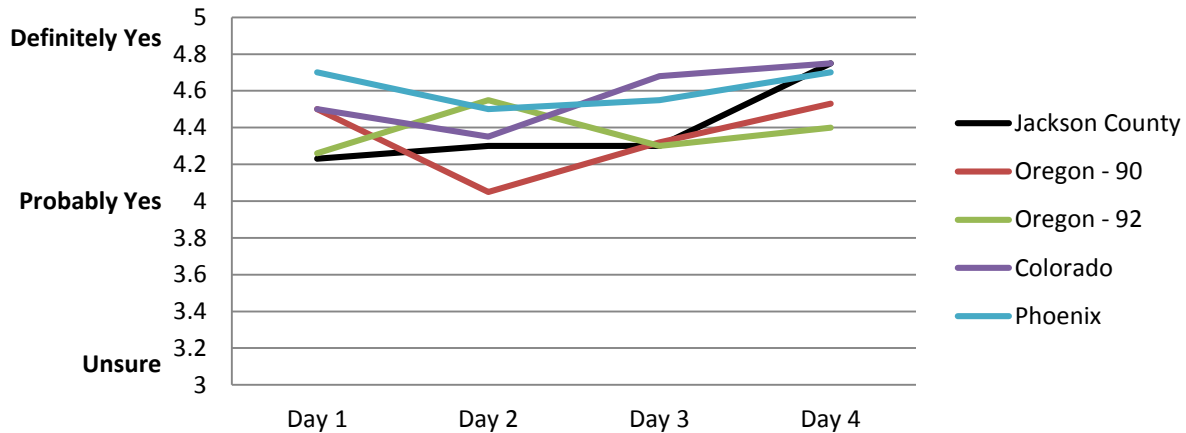
To explore how variations in process design influenced equal speaking opportunities in 2014, at the end of each day we asked panelists to assess whether they “had sufficient opportunity to express [their] views today” on a scale from “Definitely No” to “Definitely Yes.” Figure 1.12 presents those results. Again, almost all panelists rated the reviews highly on this criterion, saying that they definitely or probably had sufficient speaking opportunities.

Consideration of Different Views

Similar patterns emerge when panelists were asked, “When experts or other CIR panelists expressed views different from your own today, how often did you consider carefully what they had to say?” (Figure 1.13). The presence of facilitators and the ample opportunity for small and large group deliberations likely led to this high level of satisfaction. The two reviews scoring lowest along these criteria were Oregon Measure 90 and Jackson County. As discussed above, the lower levels of satisfaction in Jackson County may be because much of the small group deliberations were occupied by voting and prioritizing the claims, rather than deliberating on them. This likely decreased panelists’ opportunities both to express their own views and to adequately consider the views of others. In the case of Oregon Measure 90, the lower levels of satisfaction are likely due to the absence of small group moderators for many of the small group sessions. Bolstering this finding, the higher levels of having opportunities to express their views on days three and four likely reflect the infusion of small group

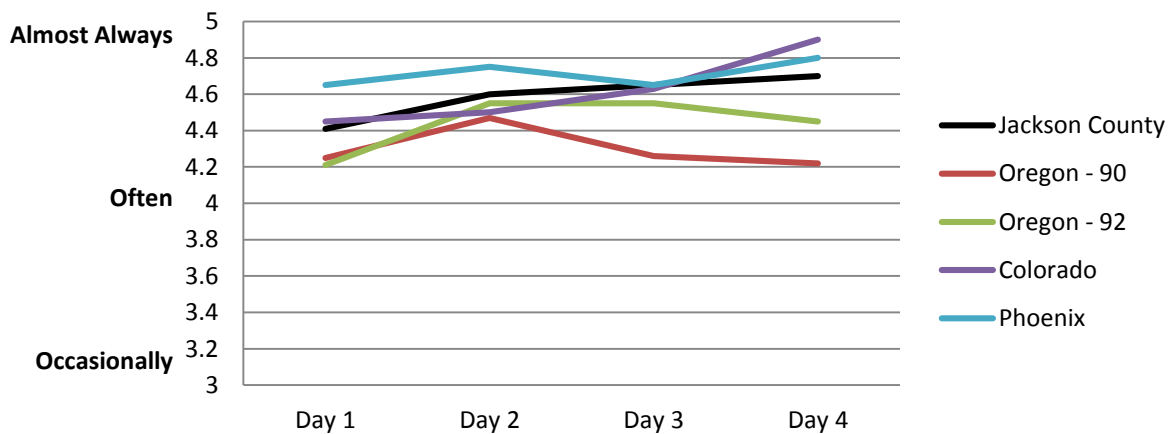
facilitators, who began moderating small groups at the end of day three and continued facilitations on day four.

Figure 1.12 Panelists’ assessment of having sufficient opportunity to express their views, 2014



One specific note about the role of facilitators bears mentioning in relation to mutual comprehension. At the Phoenix CIR, some panelists spoke English as a second language and, at times, observers noted that a language barrier appeared to prevent some panelists from fully comprehending the information or from fully engaging in the discussions. In some instances, this barrier seemed to prevent the facilitators and panelists from fully comprehending one another. During one session, a panelist was unclear about the assigned task, and the facilitator had difficulty steering the panelist towards the group’s goals. In the end, the panelist grew frustrated with the facilitator, thinking that the facilitator did not find her input valuable. Preparing for such language and cultural barriers will be important for the CIR to maintain democratic discussion as it expands to ever more diverse settings, beyond the state of Oregon.

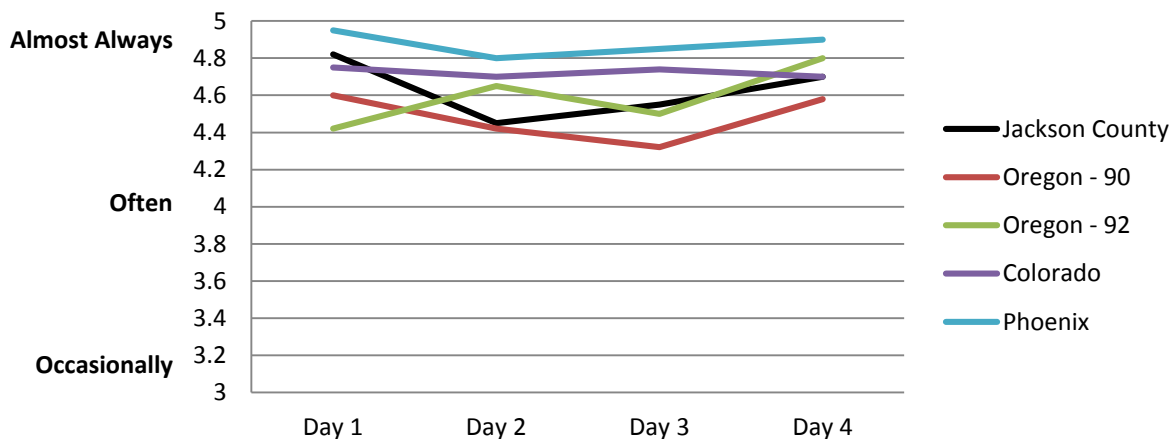
Figure 1.13 Panelist reports of considering the views of others, 2014



Mutual Respect

To assess the level of respect, we asked panelists at the end of each day, “How often do you feel that other panelists treated you with respect today?” (Figure 1.14). Again, the CIR rates very highly across reviews, with almost all panelists on every day reporting they often or almost always felt respected. Moreover, this measure appears fairly stable over time, with little variation among days or across reviews. The days that do tend to rank lowest in this regard are often days two and three, when the panelists hear from the advocates. On these days, the panelists may be responding more to the advocate presentations than to treatment by other panelists. Panelists often expressed frustration with the advocates when they felt that the advocates were avoiding their questions or failing to provide concrete answers. The lower feelings of respect may be a response to these tactics by advocates. Panelists engaged in extensive deliberations about the topic may feel disrespected by advocates who they feel are trying to manipulate them rather than provide them with strong and reliable information.

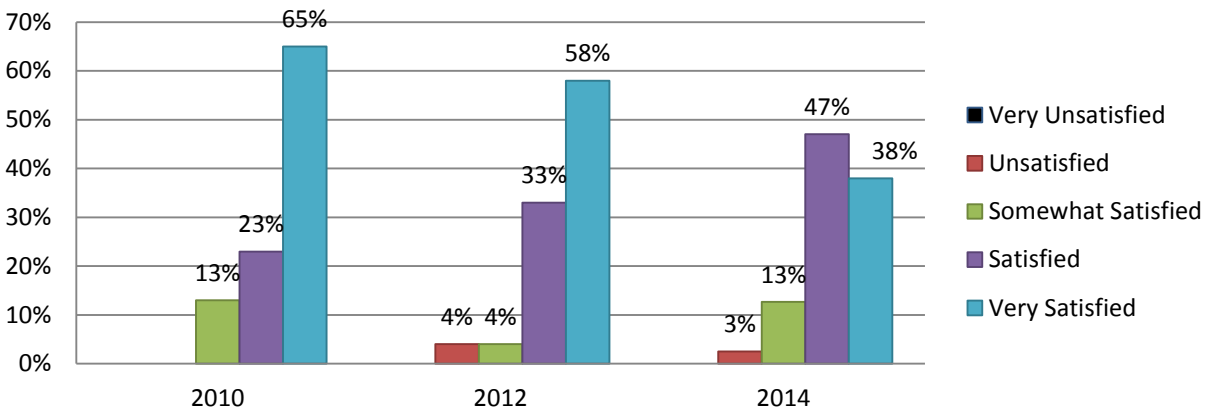
Figure 1.14 Panelists’ assessments of feeling respected, 2014



1.4 Decision Making

In evaluating the decision-making process, we look to the panelists’ satisfaction with the Key Findings and with the Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure. Though satisfaction with the Key Findings remains high, as shown in Figure 1.15, a steady decline in satisfaction emerges when looking across years: Panelists in 2014 were more likely to be satisfied than very satisfied. (A detailed discussion of the quality of the statements themselves will be provided in Section 2.)

As previously mentioned, rather than generating claims independently based on advocate presentations, in 2014 the panelists were given a list of claims developed by the advocates at the beginning of the process and worked with these claims throughout their deliberations. The panelists used these to construct questions for the advocates and after the advocates’ presentations would edit and sort them according to strength and reliability. Panelists continued this process throughout the course of the review, eventually creating a list of the ten best claims, which became the basis for the Key Findings. (The reviews varied in the amount to which they were given time to edit these claims, as will be discussed below.)

Figure 1.15 Panelists' satisfaction with the Key Findings, 2010-2014

One advantage to this format was the considerable time saved on grammatical editing. In 2010 and 2012, the fourth day of the CIR in which panelists developed and edited the Key Findings often proved the most problematic aspect of the process. This is due, in part, to the difficulty of large group editing, which consistently proved frustrating and time consuming. To overcome this difficulty in 2010 and 2012, panelists would often break off into ad-hoc groups so that a small group of panelists could craft a draft of this section. Although this sped up the process, it gave undue power to a small group of panelists. Providing panelists with pre-written statements appeared to solve this issue, as panelists needed to spend much less time engaged in grammatical editing or figuring out how to best phrase pertinent facts.

The disadvantage lies, however, in the additional power this provides to advocates, who had the ability to craft arguments that would eventually end up in the Statement. Though on its own, this may not be problematic, the panelists were not necessarily given enough opportunity to craft findings or arguments not provided by the advocates. Though some time was given for this, it was often tacked on to other goals, such as prioritizing the already-developed claims. Additional time provided to the panelists to identify information or arguments not provided by the advocates or extra encouragement that they are free to edit the advocates' statements may increase panelists' overall satisfaction with the statements as well as their autonomy in crafting them.¹⁹

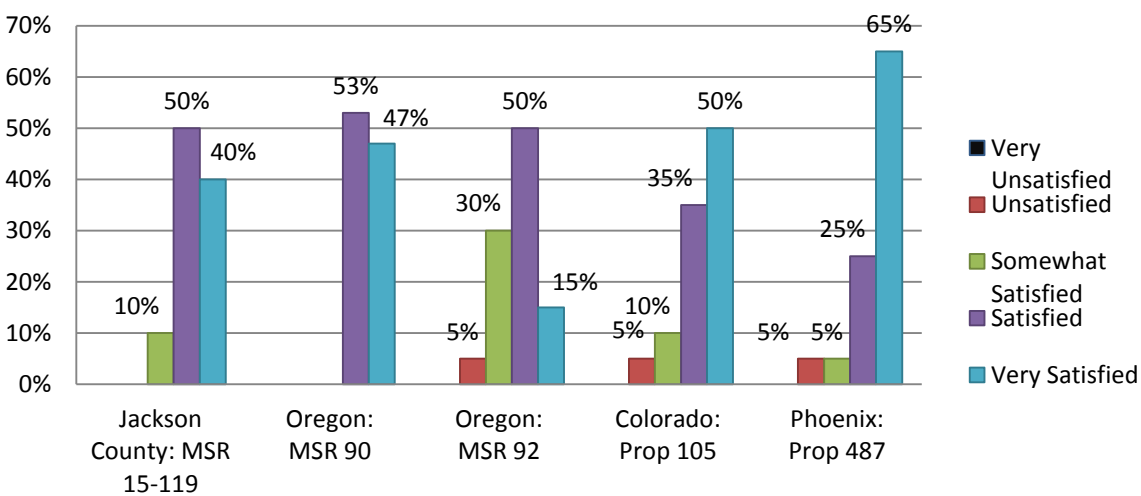
A related problem came with the order in which claims were prioritized. Claims were often prioritized before the panelists had a chance to edit them. This meant that important claims were deemed unreliable and, thus, panelists did not have an opportunity to edit those claims to make them more reliable. At times this meant that claims would drop out of the discussion for statistical errors or biased language even though the underlying information was important to relay to voters. Recommendations for improving the way that claims are edited and prioritized throughout the process and during the statement-writing sections will be provided in the recommendations section of this report.

When looking across 2014 CIRs (Figure 1.16), we again see variation in levels of satisfaction, with satisfaction rising steadily as the reviews progressed with the exception of Measure 92. A primary reason for the lower levels of satisfaction in the earlier reviews is likely the lack of time provided for crafting the final Key Findings and process confusion about how they would be finalized. During the first

¹⁹ Healthy Democracy is more sanguine about this aspect of the 2014 CIR procedure and notes that the Colorado and Arizona pilot projects used a revised process that devoted more time to this task.

three reviews, panelists were pressed for time to develop the final Key Findings. This was particularly acute for Measure 92, in which process implementation errors forced panelists to stay later than expected to finalize the Citizens' Statement. Perhaps the more pressing problem, however, was confusion about how the statements were to be constructed. Panelists in those reviews were often confused about the purpose of their votes, not necessarily realizing that they were voting to either select or finalize the Key Findings. In the case of Measure 92, process confusion meant that neither the panelists nor the moderators were quite sure at some points whether they were voting to prioritize the Key Findings for editing or to place them in the Citizens' Statement. This type of process confusion for the first few reviews took up a significant amount of time that detracted from the time allocated to discuss and edit the claims.

Figure 1.16 Panelist satisfaction with the Key Findings, 2014



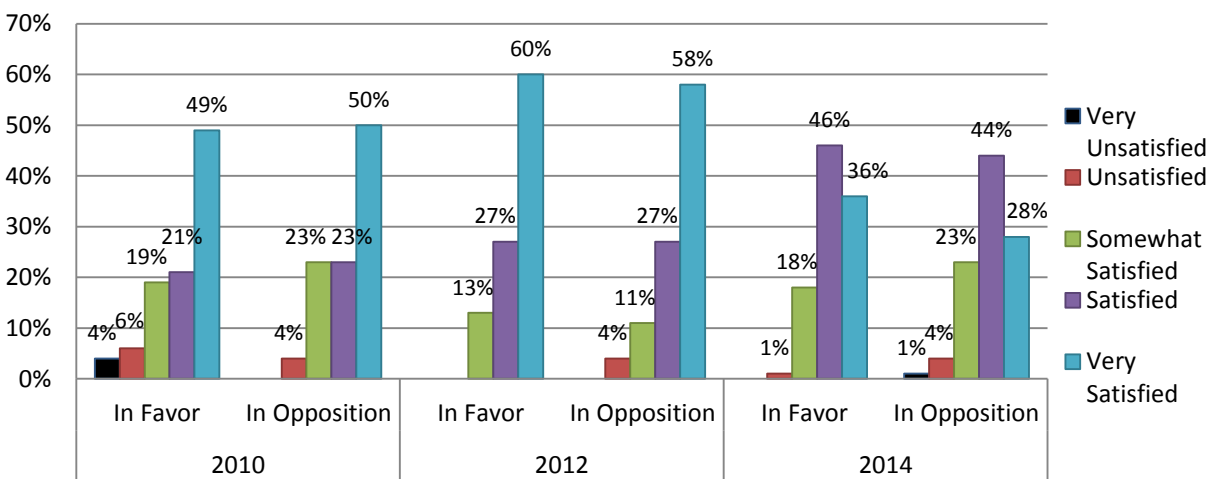
Turning to the panelists' satisfaction with the Arguments in Favor and Opposition to the Measure, we see variation over time in panelists' level of satisfaction across years, with 2012 scoring highest in this regard (Figure 1.17). One process change in 2012 that likely led to higher levels of satisfaction with this section of the statement was the ability for panelists to provide feedback on the pro and con arguments. After panelists split into their respective groups to write these sections, the groups then read the sections they had crafted to one another and solicited feedback from those panelists who were not members of their pro or con statement writing group. This allowed all of the panelists to provide input into the final pro and con arguments and led to more balanced and accurate statements.

This process was mostly upheld in 2014, though time constraints at times prevented adequate opportunity for this.²⁰ A second design modification, however, provided even more opportunity for neutrality in these sections. In 2014, the panelists were randomly assigned to write either the pro or con arguments, rather than placing panelists in groups based on how they would vote, which had been done in 2010 and 2012. This decision appeared to create a more balanced level of satisfaction with these

²⁰ Assessing whether a process had "adequate" opportunity for a given panelist to participate in one or another part of the process is difficult. There is no absolute standard for adequacy, and the time available for any given task remains finite. Nonetheless, there have been times during the CIR in 2010, 2012, and 2014 when panelists expressed the feeling that they had to rush through a part of the process. On this concept generally, see adequacy of speaking opportunities in Gastil (2014).

sections of the Citizens' Statement. Though fewer panelists reported being extremely satisfied with this section, fewer also reported being unsatisfied with this section, and the overall level of satisfaction remained relatively high. Moreover, observation of these groups indicated that panelists may have been more thoughtful and less strategic when writing these sections than they had been in the past. Observations revealed that panelists were more likely to report thinking about what voters needed to know when writing these sections and appeared to be less focused on ensuring that their argument was more persuasive than the opposing group's. In addition, in instances when a small minority chooses one side, as was the case in 2010, dividing the groups in two provides a more equitable distribution of panelists' abilities, better ensuring that one side is not disadvantaged by the exclusion of more persuasive panelists or better writers and editors.

Figure 1.17 Panelist satisfaction with arguments in favor and opposition, 2010-2014



Looking across the 2014 CIRs allows us to further explore how process variation affected satisfaction with this section (Figures 1.18 and 1.19). One of the biggest points of process confusion when crafting the Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure in 2014 was over the inclusion of claims in both the Key Findings and the Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure sections. Because panelists voted to prioritize claims for the pro and con arguments before finalizing the Key Findings, claims often ended up in both sections of the Citizens' Statement. Moreover, edits made to these claims when constructing the Key Findings were not always carried over when constructing the pro and con arguments. This left some panelists frustrated as they felt that a significant portion of their work had been discounted when moving between tasks. (The problems associated with this from a voter's standpoint will be discussed in the next section.) Even so, much of this process confusion had been resolved for the latter two reviews, where panelists reported being largely satisfied with this section of the Citizens' Statement.²¹

²¹ Healthy Democracy notes that this problem was, once again, a training and management error, which was resolved by the time the Colorado and Arizona pilot projects were conducted.

1.5 Summary

We found that the 2014 CIRs generally maintained the high standards for democratic deliberation evidenced in the 2010 and 2012 reviews. Some reviews had difficulty processing complex scientific information (e.g., during the Oregon GMO labeling review), and this showed up in a variety of more modest satisfaction ratings. In addition, we found that the statement writing process saw a slight reduction in quality in 2014 as panelists were pressed for time and had less autonomy in crafting their Citizens’ Statements. A related set of recommendations for future CIRs will appear in Section 5.

Figure 1.18 Panelist satisfaction with the Arguments in Favor, 2014

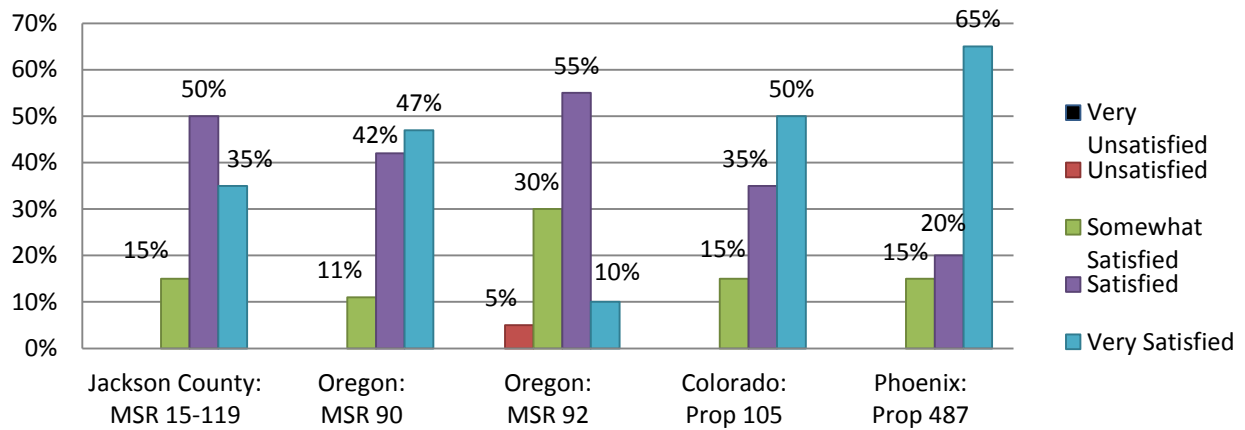
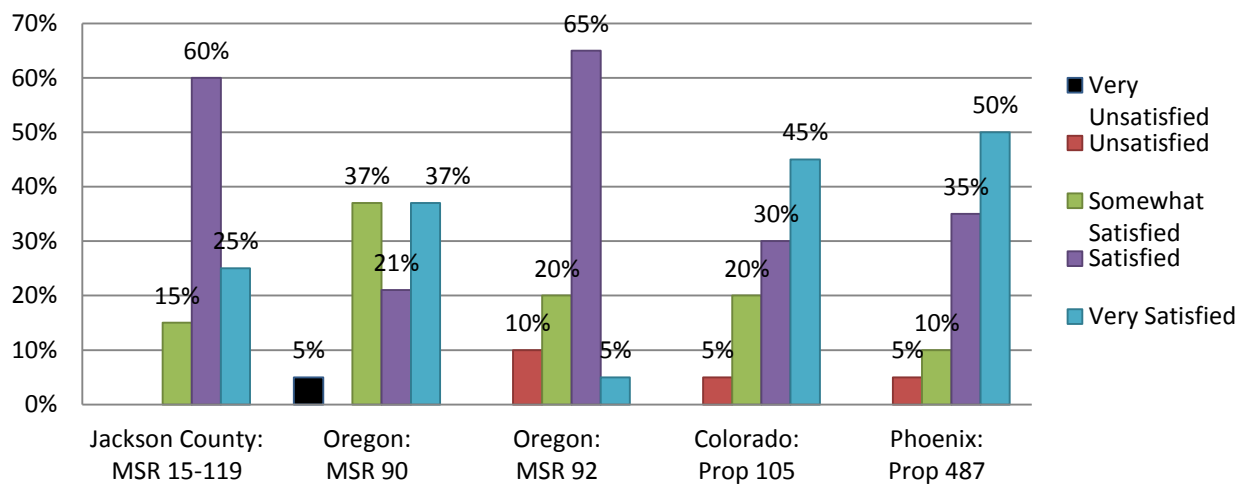


Figure 1.19 Panelist satisfaction with the Arguments in Opposition, 2014



Section 2. Accuracy, Readability, and Completeness of the Citizens' Statements

In previous reports, we have provided general assessments of Citizens' Statements, but in this report we look more closely at all of the Statements produced by CIRs from 2010 through 2014. The intent of this section is to assess the Citizens' Statements on their own terms, as documents produced by CIR panels for use by voters.

The three assessment criteria we use are accuracy, readability, and comprehensiveness. No matter how deliberative the CIR process, its success depends on providing voters with Statements that have accurate content that voters can understand without great difficulty. Successful Citizens' Statements should also address the kinds of questions voters need answered when weighing ballot measures. Though the limited length of the CIR Statement may make it impossible to answer all such questions, a more comprehensive document should be more useful to voters.

To assess accuracy, each assertion in each statement was evaluated to determine whether it was verifiable, supported by the evidence presented to the panelists, and consistent with the text of the ballot initiative on which the panelists deliberated as well as other publicly available factual and legal information. The accuracy rating is a numerical score indicating the percentage of error-free substantive sentences in each statement.

To judge a CIR Statement's readability, each was measured using tools that determine the reading-grade level (in the U.S. public school system) required to understand the language used in the statement.²² A less mechanical procedure was then used to judge the clarity of each statement in terms of grammatical correctness, coherence and avoidance of jargon.

Finally, to determine the extent to which the Citizens' Statements provided informational content that is of value to voters, each assertion in each statement was coded using a coding scheme designating fifteen features—specifically topics and functions—commonly observed in the transcripts of panelists' discussions during the 2010 Oregon CIRs. The frequency with which these features appeared in the 2010 Oregon CIR panelists' conversations is interpreted to indicate kinds of informational content that citizens particularly value as they deliberate about ballot initiatives.²³

In many of these cases, we have recommendations for how to improve the Citizens' Statements, but we save those for the final part of the report (Section 5).

2.1 Accuracy

In general, the Citizens' Statements produced to date were highly accurate, as shown in Table 2.1. For all nine statements, the vast majority of assertions were supported by the text of the measures or information submitted to the panelists, were consistent with other facts or law, and were verifiable. Five of the Citizens' Statements were free of problems related to accuracy. Two Citizens' Statements contained one error each, one statement contained one unverifiable assertion, and one statement contained one error and one unverifiable assertion.

²² Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers, & Chissom (1975); Gunning (1968); McLaughlin (1969). Formulas for the scores appear in the note to the table accompanying this section.

²³ Richards & Gastil (2013); Richards (2014).

Table 2.1 Measures of the accuracy of CIR Citizens' Statements

Statement	Accuracy Percentage
CIR 2010 - OR M73 (MandMin) Statement	100.0
CIR 2010 - OR M74 (MedMJ) Statement	100.0
CIR 2012 - OR M82 (Casino) Statement	96.6
CIR 2012 - OR M85 (Kicker) Statement	100.0
CIR 2014 - AZ P487 (Pensions) Statement	96.9
CIR 2014 - CO P105 (GMO labels) Statement	100.0
CIR 2014 - OR M90 (Primary) Citizens' Statement	100.0
CIR 2014 - OR M92 (GMO labels) Statement	91.3
CIR 2014 - Jackson Cty. OR M15-119 (GMO seeds) Statement	97.5
Mean	98.0
Standard deviation	2.9

Note. Accuracy indicates the percentage of sentences in each Citizens' Statement that are free from factual or legal error.

In three instances, Citizens' Statements contained claims that were inconsistent with the text of the measure.

- In the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 82 of 2012, one finding stated that "for every dollar of revenue produced by private casinos, 25 cents would go to the State lottery," whereas the text of the measure states that the share is twenty percent.²⁴
- In the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 92 of 2014, one key finding states that the measure will require "labeling foods as non-GM," whereas the text of the measure does not require any foods to be labeled as non-GM.
- In the Citizens' Statement for Jackson County (Oregon Measure 15-119 of 2014), the first claim in opposition asserts that the measure "threatens farmers by empowering any citizen or special interest group ... to file a ... frivolous lawsuit against a grower...." Though the authors of that statement might have meant "frivolous" in a non-technical sense, the particular word has a specific legal meaning, namely as "having no legal basis."²⁵ The text of the measure contains no language authorizing anyone to file a baseless lawsuit. Rather, the text of the measure authorizes individuals or groups to "enforce this Ordinance through" a lawsuit.²⁶ Further, Oregon law requires a person who files a baseless lawsuit, and who loses the suit, to pay the other party's attorney's fees.²⁷

²⁴ Oregon Measure 82 of 2012, § 4(4)(d)(F) provides that "of the 25% of adjusted gross revenue paid by the taxpaying casino to the State of Oregon ... the casino shall pay: ... 80% into the Oregon State Lottery Fund" (Oregon Secretary of State, 2012, p. 97).

²⁵ Garner (1999, p. 678).

²⁶ Jackson County 2014 Measure 15-119 § 635.11(b).

²⁷ Oregon Revised Statutes § 20.105 (2015). Further, Oregon state law does not appear to allow the state law penalizing those who file baseless lawsuits to be changed by local laws, but even if it did, the text of Measure 15-119 contains no language purporting to change the state law that penalizes a person who files a baseless suit. The Oregon state statute penalizing baseless lawsuits applies to Measure 15-119, because that statute applies to

All of these errors in Citizens' Statements, and especially the latter two, seem problematic because they may cause voters to harbor false beliefs of some magnitude about the content of the measure.

Two Citizens' Statements include unverifiable assertions among their findings.

- In the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 92 of 2014, one Key Finding reads in part: "If we are going to sell GMO salmon that contain genes from an eel-like organism ... or other engineered fish or meat now in development, we should label them."
- In the Citizens' Statement for Phoenix, Arizona Proposition 487 of 2014, one Key Finding reads in part: "Proposition 487 should end the practice of pension spiking..."

These assertions are not statements of fact, but policy prescriptions. Indeed, the first of these assertions is a policy prescription favoring the measure. Their accuracy cannot be verified,²⁸ so including such assertions in the Key Findings section of a Citizens' Statement may confuse voters, who are likely to expect that section to contain only verifiable claims. In addition, when such assertions plainly favor one side in the debate about the measure, as the policy prescription contained in the Key Findings section of Oregon Measure 92 of 2014 does, they may cause voters to perceive the panel as biased.

2.2 Readability

The concept of readability has spawned multiple systematic measurement techniques. In this report, we employ three common scoring methods, each of which emphasizes different linguistic attributes or combinations of attributes:

- The Flesch-Kincaid score, which accounts for both average sentence length and average number of syllables per word, provides a gauge of the overall complexity of language in a text.
- The FOG score likewise accounts for both sentence- and word-length, but emphasizes sophisticated vocabulary by giving more weight to words having three or more syllables.
- The SMOG score, based solely on words having three or more syllables, measures only the amount of sophisticated vocabulary used in a piece of writing.

These measures indicate that the overall linguistic complexity of the Citizens' Statements lies at the level of a high school senior, or slightly higher.

Some of the most complex language in the statements appears in introductory paragraphs, where readers learn the purpose and design of the CIR process. For example, in most Oregon statements the introductory paragraph includes a sentence containing thirty-four words, eleven of which have three or more syllables, and a compound predicate.²⁹ Language intended for readers having a twelfth-

Oregon circuit courts, which have jurisdiction over suits brought to enforce the measure (see Jackson County 2014 Measure 15-119 § 635.10). The question whether the measure changes local court procedure is not irrelevant because the Oregon Constitution authorizes local governments to make some laws governing local courts (Oregon Constitution, art. VII, §2b). No Oregon state statute appears to allow Oregon Revised Statutes § 20.105 to be changed by local law, however.

²⁸ Some moral and political philosophers (e.g., Landemore, 2013) might argue that these policy prescriptions have truth value. Even assuming that these philosophers are correct, we cannot identify any means of verifying the truth value of these policy prescriptions that most voters are likely to accept.

²⁹ The sentence reads: "The panelists were randomly selected from registered voters in Oregon and balanced to fairly reflect the state's voting population based on location of residence, party registration, age, gender, education, ethnicity, and likelihood of voting." See, e.g., Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 90 of 2014.

fourteenth-grade reading level may be inaccessible to many intended readers of Citizens' Statements, given that a substantial share of adults in the three states in which CIRs have been held have an educational attainment below the twelfth grade, or lack basic literacy skills.³⁰ Such language is also inconsistent with the reading-level standard of at least one state government under which the CIR operates.³¹

Table 2.1 puts required reading level in a relative context by juxtaposing the six Oregon Citizens' Statements from 2010-2014 with other voter-pamphlet information. The paid pro and con arguments that appeared in the *Oregon Voters' Pamphlet* for those six CIR issues required the lowest reading level. The fiscal impact statements and ballot titles were next in complexity, followed by the Citizens' Statements. The explanatory statements and full text of the measure were both more demanding than the CIR, with the measures themselves requiring a college or graduate-level education to decipher.

Table 2.1 Readability of Oregon CIR Citizens' Statements versus other voting guide materials for the same statewide ballot measures, 2010-2014

Document Type	Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level	SMOG Reading Level	FOG Reading Level	Index Reading Level	Rank: Easiest to Read
Pro and Con Arguments	9.6	11.7	8.2	9.8	1
Ballot Title	13.3	12.9	7.5	11.2	2
Financial Impact Statements	11.9	13.0	10.1	11.7	3
CIR Citizens' Statements	12.1	13.9	12.0	12.7	4
Explanatory Statements	13.8	15.1	14.2	14.4	5
Texts of Measures	15.2	17.0	20.6	17.6	6

Reading level scores for each Citizens' Statement from 2010-2014 appear in Table 2.2, along with another indicator of readability. We assessed the clarity of the language used in Citizens' Statements in terms of grammatical correctness, lucidity, and coherence, along with the avoidance of jargon (or providing definitions, when such terms cannot be avoided). These are formal characteristics of language that can affect understanding but are not captured by the Flesch-Kincaid, FOG, and SMOG scores. For each statement, the percentage of sentences having these characteristics was determined, and the *Clarity* scores in Table 2.2 report the average score for the three characteristics. Summarizing across those scores, it appears that Citizens' Statements generally rate as having very clear language. Grammatical and vocabulary errors are few, and those that arise generally do not prevent the language from conveying its intended meaning.

³⁰ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2009 the percentage of adults aged 25 or above who had not obtained a high school diploma or equivalent degree was 15.8% in Arizona, 10.7% in Colorado, and 10.9% in Oregon (Ryan & Siebens, 2012). The rate for all voters may be higher when adults aged 18-24 are accounted for. In addition, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy estimated that as of 2003 the percentage of adults lacking basic literacy was 13% in Arizona, 10% in Colorado, and 10% in Oregon (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

³¹ The maximum reading level for Oregon state government information, established by the Oregon Department of Administrative Services, is tenth grade (Oregon Department of Administrative Services, 2015).

Table 2.2 Measures of the readability and clarity of CIR Citizens' Statements, 2010-2014

Statement	Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level	FOG Reading Level	SMOG Reading Level	Clarity
CIR 2010 - OR M73 (MandMin) Statement	11.3	11.5	13.7	100.0
CIR 2010 - OR M74 (MedMJ) Statement	12.5	10.0	13.7	100.0
CIR 2012 - OR M82 (Casino) Statement	12.6	12.5	14.5	98.0
CIR 2012 - OR M85 (Kicker) Statement	12.0	11.9	14.0	99.4
CIR 2014 - AZ P487 (Pensions) Statement	12.5	12.3	13.0	100.0
CIR 2014 - CO P105 (GMO labels) Statement	11.2	10.5	12.6	98.2
CIR 2014 - OR M90 (Primary) Citizens' Statement	11.8	10.1	13.6	98.0
CIR 2014 - OR M92 (GMO labels) Statement	12.2	12.9	14.0	100.0
CIR 2014 - Jackson Cty. OR M15-119 (GMO seeds) Statement	12.7	12.3	13.5	100.0
Mean	12.1	11.6	13.6	99.3
Standard Deviation	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.9

Note. Flesch-Kincaid, FOG, and SMOG scores indicate grade-levels within the U.S. public school grade numbering system, so that, e.g., “12.1” means slightly higher than a twelfth-grade reading level. The formula for the Flesch-Kincaid score is: $0.39 * (\text{words} / \text{sentences}) + 11.8 (\text{syllables} / \text{words}) - 15.59$ (Kincaid et al., 1975, p. 14). The formula used to calculate the FOG score is: $((\text{words of one or two syllables} + 3 * \text{words of three or more syllables}) / \text{sentences}) - 2) / 2$ (Kincaid et al., 1975, p. 14). The formula for the SMOG score is: $(\text{square root of } (\text{words of three or more syllables per 30 sentences})) + 3$ (McLaughlin, 1969, p. 639). *Clarity* is an index consisting of the mean of three measures: the percentage of sentences in each Citizens' Statement that are free from, respectively, grammatical or vocabulary error, confusing or incoherent phrasing, and undefined jargon.

2.3 Comprehensiveness

Previous examination of voting guides in general, and Citizens' Statements in particular, led us to identify a set of issues that voters may need addressed to render informed judgments on ballot measures.³² In practice, even a useful voting guide may not address all of these issues, but it is illuminating to examine whether the different Citizens' Statements address fifteen different issues, such as these:

- the policy goals of the initiative,
- the likely actual effects of the initiative,
- alternative means (other than the initiative) of achieving those policy goals,

³² The issues, or content features, consist of topics and functions. The topics are the *need* for the initiative, the *policy goals* of the initiative, the likely *actual effects* of the initiative, the likely *fiscal effects* of the initiative, the likely *effectiveness* of the initiative in achieving those policy goals, *alternative means* (other than the initiative) of achieving those policy goals, *unintended consequences* that could arise from the initiative, *existing laws* relevant to the initiative, laws in *other jurisdictions* that were similar to the initiative, *reasons for using a new law* rather than an alternative means to address the policy goals, *bases for possible legal challenges* to the initiative, and relevant *values*. The functions, or purposes, are *description or explanation*, *evaluation*, and the *application* of legal rules in the initiative to hypothetical sets of facts. See Richards (2014).

- unintended consequences that could arise from the initiative,
- laws in other jurisdictions that were similar to the initiative, and
- reasons for using a new law rather than an alternative means to address the policy goals.

In terms of how many of these content features the CIR has addressed, the trend has been one of steady improvement from good to very good performance. Table 2.4 shows that whereas the 2010 Citizens' Statements each exhibited twelve of the fifteen content features of concern to citizens, the 2012 statements possessed thirteen of those features on average, and the 2014 statements possessed fourteen or all fifteen features. Ten of the content features—among them three functions and seven topics³³—appear in every Citizens' Statement produced to date.

Table 2.4 Measures of the comprehensiveness of CIR Citizens' Statements, 2010-2014

Statement	Comprehensiveness Percentage
CIR 2010 - OR M73 (MandMin) Statement	80.0
CIR 2010 - OR M74 (MedMJ) Statement	80.0
CIR 2012 - OR M82 (Casino) Statement	86.7
CIR 2012 - OR M85 (Kicker) Statement	93.3
CIR 2014 - AZ P487 (Pensions) Statement	93.3
CIR 2014 - CO P105 (GMO labels) Statement	93.3
CIR 2014 - OR M90 (Primary) Citizens' Statement	93.3
CIR 2014 - OR M92 (GMO labels) Statement	100.0
CIR 2014 - Jackson Cty. OR M15-119 (GMO seeds) Statement	93.3
Mean	98.0
Standard deviation	6.8

Note. *Comprehensiveness* indicates the percentage of fifteen features of citizens' legal communication employed in each Citizens' Statement.

Many of the content features in our coding scheme concern the task of identifying the intended effects (*i.e.*, the policy goals) of an initiative and comparing them to the likely actual effects of the measure. Most features related to this task—including descriptions of the need, policy goals, likely actual effects, including fiscal effects, and likely effectiveness of the measure—involve determining whether the initiative is likely to achieve the objectives its drafters intend, a determination that appears to be important to citizens who deliberate about initiatives.³⁴ The latter four topics—policy goals,³⁵ likely actual effects,³⁶ fiscal effects,³⁷ and likely effectiveness³⁸—were observed in every Citizens' Statement, and the fifth, the need,³⁹ is expressed in all statements produced in 2012 and 2014.

³³ The topical features that appear in all nine Citizens' Statements are policy goals, effectiveness, unintended consequences, actual effects, fiscal effects, existing laws, and values.

³⁴ Richards (2012); Richards & Gastil (2013).

³⁵ An example appears in the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 85 of 2012: "The intent of this measure is for 100% of the 'kicker' to go to K-12 education."

³⁶ See the example appearing in the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 74 of 2010: "Availability of marijuana will increase [if the measure is enacted]."

Unintended consequences are another salient topic related to the intended effects of initiatives. Beyond their interest in whether an initiative is likely to achieve its goals, citizens often express concerns about possible unanticipated adverse effects of initiatives.⁴⁰ Every Citizens' Statement to date has addressed these concerns.⁴¹

The topic of values⁴² and the function of evaluation⁴³ are also content features that appear in all nine Citizens' Statements. Reading descriptions of values relevant to an initiative can encourage voters to reflect on their own value commitments that pertain to the measure. Such reflection can improve voting decisions by enabling voters to assess trade-offs among policy choices.⁴⁴ Both the likely effectiveness determination and the identification of unintended consequences involve the function of evaluation, the making of judgments about initiatives. The presence of these judgments in Citizens' Statements can aid voters by serving either as cues to follow, or, when expressly supported by reasons—as they often are in Citizens' Statements—as spurs to reflection about the merits of initiatives.

Descriptions of the application of legal rules in an initiative to hypothetical fact patterns⁴⁵ likewise appear in every Citizens' Statement. Reading accounts of how an initiative would apply in particular situations helps citizens to grasp the content of the initiative, as well as to evaluate likely actual effects of the initiative, and thereby to judge the probable effectiveness and risk of unexpected adverse consequences of the measure.⁴⁶

Further, citizens regularly seek information about benchmarks or alternatives with which to compare the initiative.⁴⁷ In Citizens' Statements these are reflected in descriptions of existing laws in one's own state that are related to the measure—*i.e.*, the legal status quo that would be altered by the initiative⁴⁸—alternative means of achieving the initiative's policy goals,⁴⁹ reasons for preferring the

³⁷ The Citizens' Statement for Phoenix, Arizona Proposition 487 of 2014 provides an example: “[Ending the practice of pension spiking, which this measure provides for,] results in significant savings to the city and taxpayers.”

³⁸ An example appears in the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 90 of 2014: “Proponents do not predict that M90 would increase voter participation.”

³⁹ See the example appearing in the Citizens' Statement for Colorado Proposition 105 of 2014: “No long-term epidemiological studies in humans have been carried out to determine whether there are any health effects associated with GM food consumption.”

⁴⁰ Richards (2012); Richards & Gastil (2013).

⁴¹ The Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 73 of 2010 provides an example: “An unintended consequence of M73 is that juveniles aged 15 to 17 are subject to 25 year mandatory minimum sentences.”

⁴² An example comes from the Citizens' Statement for Jackson County, Oregon Measure 15-119 of 2014: “Responsible farming has always required communication between neighbors.”

⁴³ The Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 92 of 2014 provides an example: “[Labeling genetically engineered foods] would offer [citizens] more control and transparency over their food purchasing decisions.”

⁴⁴ Gastil (2008).

⁴⁵ See the examples in the Citizens' Statements for Oregon Measure 73 of 2010: “Sexting falls under the definition of explicit material [under the measure]” and Colorado Proposition 105 of 2014: “Many foods would require labels even if they don't contain GMOs.”

⁴⁶ Richards (2012); Richards & Gastil (2013).

⁴⁷ Richards & Gastil (2013).

⁴⁸ The Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 90 of 2014 offers this example: “Currently, every party has the right to have a candidate on General Election Ballot.”

⁴⁹ An example comes from the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 73 of 2010: “No one convicted for felony sex offenses [under the measure] would receive the opportunity for treatment.”

initiative to existing law and alternative means,⁵⁰ and similar laws in other states or countries.⁵¹ Descriptions of existing laws, alternative means, and reasons for preferring the initiative to existing law and alternative means can inform voters about the need for the initiative and about other possible ways of accomplishing the policy goals of the initiative. Accounts of laws resembling the initiative in other jurisdictions allow readers to assess the likely effectiveness and unintended consequences of the initiative. Thus, descriptions of existing laws, alternative means, reasons for preferring an initiative to alternative means, and other jurisdictions' similar laws can substantially enrich the information base with which voters determine the benefits and disadvantages of initiatives. All nine Citizens' Statements included descriptions of existing laws, and eight of the nine statements provided reasons for preferring the initiative to existing laws or to alternative means, but only six Citizens' Statements described alternative means of accomplishing policy objectives, and just four—all written in 2014—expressly compared an initiative to similar laws in other states.⁵²

Bases for legal challenges to an initiative⁵³ are another topic of considerable concern to citizens who make decisions about initiatives.⁵⁴ Descriptions of grounds on which a court might strike down all or part of a measure can help voters to gauge the value of their time and votes spent on a measure—since voters may consider wasted a vote for or time devoted to considering a measure all or the core provisions of which are likely to be invalidated. Such descriptions can also help voters to identify the provisions of a measure, and their probable desirable and undesirable consequences, that are likely to remain in force after a court strikes down invalid provisions. Yet Citizens' Statements produced by two Citizens' Initiative Review panels that discussed legal grounds for challenging the measures—those regarding Oregon Measure 73 of 2010 and Jackson County, Oregon Measure 15-119 of 2014—failed to mention legal grounds for challenging the initiatives.⁵⁵

2.4 Efficient Design

Although the Citizens' Statements include most of the content features described above, the design of these documents has some undesirable features and lacks others that may improve its overall utility.

Section headings and sequencing

One feature commonly used in guides are topical headers that indicate the kind of information in each section, as with the headings and subheadings in this report. The Citizens' Statements have used varied

⁵⁰ The Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 74 of 2010 furnishes an example: "[The measure] introduces additional regulation and control to an existing program previously approved by Oregon voters."

⁵¹ An example is found in the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 92 of 2014: "64 countries, including most of Europe, Australia, and Japan, already require labeling of genetically engineered foods and when those countries switched to requiring labeling food prices did not go up."

⁵² In at least one instance—the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 82 of 2012—the statement includes information that is based on a comparison with similar laws in other states (here, information about the effects of the presence of a casino in a community on residents' gambling behavior), but does not expressly state that the information concerns other states' laws.

⁵³ An example comes from the Citizens' Statement for Phoenix, Arizona Proposition 487 of 2014: "Both sides expect legal challenges due to the unclear language of Proposition 487, which may delay implementation of the proposition and incur legal costs to the City of Phoenix."

⁵⁴ Richards & Gastil (2013); Richards (2014).

⁵⁵ Measure 73 does not appear ultimately to have been challenged in court, but, as of this writing, a lawsuit has already been filed against Measure 15-119, on the very ground discussed during the panelists' deliberations (Aldous, 2014).

headings since 2010, but the format in 2014 distinguished between three sections: Key Findings, Citizen Statement In Support of the Measure, and Citizen Statement In Opposition to the Measure. The first problem is that these elements are confusing in relation to the title of the full document. The one-page report of the CIR is called a Citizens' Statement, yet two of its three sections also make a claim to be Citizens' Statements. If a voter were to refer to something she read in a CIR Citizens' Statement, it would be unclear whether they meant the full document or one of these two subsections. Given the importance of explaining this novel process to new voters, such potential confusion is non-trivial.

A related issue is that the three sections of the 2014 Citizens' Statements are grammatically incommensurate: Whereas the latter parts are called "Statements" (for and against the measure), the first part comes merely as "Key Findings," rather than as a Statement of Key Findings. The 2010 version of the document was more parallel to the other sections ("Citizen Statement of a Majority of the Panel"), but that title had problems, as well (e.g., implying that it might be the only majority section, or deemphasizing the large majorities that typically support inclusion of a key finding).

The order of the main sections has also varied from 2010-2014 in a way that may reveal the optimal sequencing for these parts. In almost all versions of the statements, the Key Findings precede the arguments in favor and opposed to the measure,⁵⁶ but in some statements the Key Findings have followed the pro and con arguments.⁵⁷ Two related findings suggest that the optimal ordering has the findings first. Conventional models of deliberation and effective group decision making put at the front of the discussion sequence the establishment of a solid information base, which is the job of the findings section. Weighing pros and cons comes last, just prior to judgment.⁵⁸ Likewise, those juries that review the evidence first, before turning attention to a possible verdict, produce more robust deliberation.⁵⁹ Since assertions in Key Findings frequently serve as rationales for claims made in pro and con arguments, this sequencing allows voters to examine the factual bases for many of the judgments expressed in the pro and con argument sections of the statements, and thus can improve voters' comprehension of the justifications for those judgments. Thus, displaying the Key Findings after the pro and con arguments may interfere with the process of learning and reflection that the CIR is designed to encourage.

Another potential problem with Citizens' Statements is redundancy within and across their sections. Repeating assertions within a section wastes voters' time and may signal that either panelists failed to vet assertions carefully or that they wished to emphasize a point by, essentially, repeating it. In general, Citizens' Statements avoided redundant statements within sections. One exception, however, is the Citizens' Statement for Colorado Proposition 105 of 2014, in which two claims are repeated in the arguments opposed to the measure.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ See, e.g., the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 73 of 2010.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measures 90 and 92 of 2014 in the online edition of the *Voters' Pamphlet* (<http://www.oregonvotes.gov/pages/history/archive/nov42014/guide/english/votersguide.html>).

⁵⁸ See Gastil (2008), which draws on earlier work summarized in Gouran and Hirokawa (1996).

⁵⁹ For an overview, see Vidmar and Hans (2007).

⁶⁰ The redundant claims are as follows. The assertion: "Many foods would require labels even if they don't contain GMOs" is repeated as: "Food products would have to be labeled as 'genetically engineered' - even if they're not," and the assertion: "Others would be exempt even if they contain or are made with GMOs" is repeated as: "Other food products would be exempt from being labeled - even when they do contain or are produced with GMOs."

Within the statement sections, the different kinds of claims voters make do not have corresponding subheadings. Though such a feature may be too costly in terms of the characters they would require in an already-crowded one-page document, it is noteworthy that there are no signposts to guide voters through the functionally distinct types of assertions made in the Citizens' Statements (see Section 2.3). It is possible that voters would scan and understand the sentences that pack these Statements if those were organized according to the kind of claim each sentence made.

Grammar choices

Finally, in our review of the Statements we noticed a grammatical variation that might be a subtle source of distraction or confusion. The forms of verbs employed in Citizens' Statements at times obscure the type of effect being described. One way to distinguish descriptions of intended effects from descriptions of likely actual effects of a measure is to use different verb forms for each type of consequence: the present tense for intended effects, and the conditional or future tense for likely actual effects. An example of this approach to describing intended effects appears in the Key Findings of the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measure 85 of 2012: "This ballot measure earmarks the corporate 'kicker' to fund K-12 education." Here, a verb in the present tense, "earmarks," is used to describe an intended effect of the measure: "to fund K-12 education." Among the arguments in favor of the measure in the same statement, the conditional is used to designate a likely actual effect of the measure: "Measure 85 would keep the corporate 'kicker' dollars in the Oregon economy."

This pattern of verb forms is not consistently used, however. At times, the present tense is used to express likely actual effects of the measure, as in this example, from the arguments opposed to Measure 85: "Measure 85 removes the flexibility to place corporate kicker funds into a rainy day or other reserve fund." Although this passage describes a likely actual effect of the measure—reducing the legislature's options for addressing future revenue fluctuations—a present-tense verb, "removes," is used to describe this effect. Employing present-tense verbs to describe both intended effects and likely actual effects of a measure may confuse readers, especially when those effects are not expressly distinguished by other means, such as labeling.

2.5 Summary

Taken as a whole, the CIR has produced Citizens' Statements from 2010-2014 that get high marks for accuracy, clarity, and comprehensiveness. They generally require no more than a high school senior reading level, which is less demanding than the explanatory statements provided in the *Voters' Pamphlet*. The statements have a straightforward design, but improvements could be made in sequencing, section headings, and grammar. Recommendations regarding these issues will be discussed in Section 5.

Section 3. Voter Use and Assessment of Citizens' Statements

To understand how voters use and assess the CIR, surveys were conducted for the electorates corresponding to each of the 2014 CIR panels. The surveys maintained continuity with the approach taken in 2010 and 2012, and they made it possible to determine whether the experience of the CIR was changing for the average Oregon voter. Complementary surveys for the pilot CIRs conducted in 2014 permitted tests on different varieties of CIR and an exploration of how the CIR appears to new users.

The phone surveys were structured to be representative of the population, using sampling quotas, but the online and mail surveys used demographic weights to adjust frequency data such that the sample was representative of the population in terms of age, education, political party registration, and sex. Thus, any survey results shown in overall percentages in this and the following section reflect data that has been weighted for demographics. As it turned out, such weighting produced only small shifts in the statistical results.

Even when sampled carefully and weighted appropriately, a limitation of any such surveys, however, is that they put too much distance between the voter and the researcher, who has to rely on a small set of closed-ended questions, which must be asked through the medium of a phone, computer, or postal service. To address this limitation, we commissioned a special "usability study" in Oregon and Colorado before this year's surveys. This method, which consisted of face-to-face, loosely structured interviews with voters, provided new insights, some of which were then tested in the surveys that followed.

3.1 CIR Awareness and Citizens' Statement Use, 2010-2014

The most basic question about the CIR's adoption is whether voters become aware of the panels, read their Citizens' Statements, and find those one-page analyses useful. To answer those questions, we used a statewide phone survey of likely voters and attempted to replicate the research method used in 2010 and 2012.

The 2014 phone survey of 600 voters was conducted the final weekend before the election. The cooperation rate was 55%, which meant that more than half of the eligible respondents that interviewers successfully contacted provided a complete survey. (Comparison response rates from 2010-2012 and other basic survey data appear in Appendix C.) Using screening quotas, the phone survey's demographics were very representative of Oregon in terms of respondent party registration, residence, age, and sex.

As in previous years, an overwhelming majority of respondents (71%) made use of the official *Voters' Pamphlet*. Among those who had already cast their ballots when interviewed, 86% reported using the pamphlet.⁶¹ Those who had already voted in the election are the focus for this section, because those respondents show what information sources had been used by those whose ballots were complete. Some comparisons can be made between these respondents and an equivalent subsample from previous years, though the 2010 sample is too small for extensive comparisons.⁶²

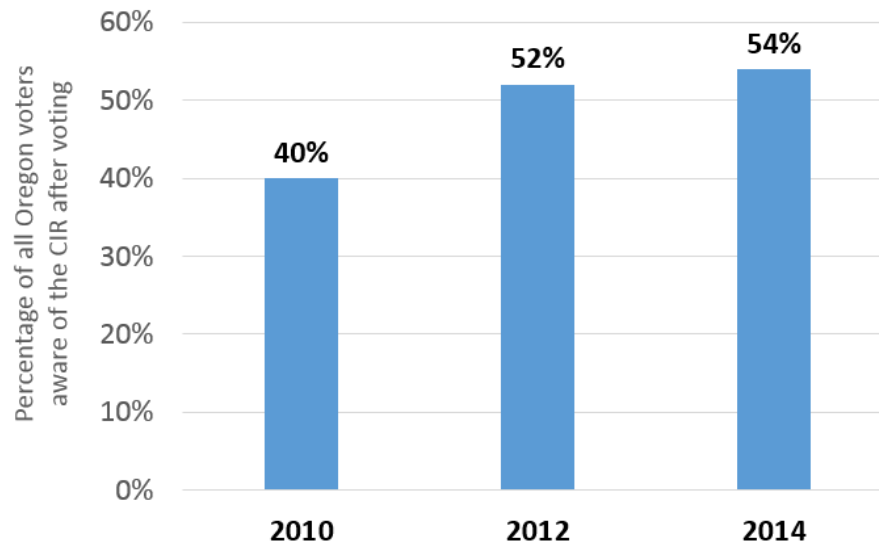
⁶¹ Question: "By this point, some people have already read the online or print version of the official Oregon Voters' Pamphlet for the November election. Others may plan to read the pamphlet later or not at all. How about you? Have you already read it, plan to read it later, or do you not intend to use it this year?"

⁶² The 2010 survey was a rolling cross-sectional survey, which emphasized maintaining a consistent weekly sample across the last two months of the election, rather than a large N at the end of the election. Moreover, the University of Washington Survey Research Center was unable to sustain its calling rate as Election Day neared in

Awareness of the CIR in Oregon

In 2014, more Oregon voters were aware of the CIR than ever before.⁶³ Figure 3.1 shows that 40% of those who had turned in ballots in 2010 had heard of the CIR. That number rose to 52% in 2012, then to 54% in 2014. Given sample sizes, the difference between 2012 and 2014 is quite small, and it will be important to continue tracking this variable in coming years, particularly if there is a significant increase in the amount of publicity given to the CIR process.

Figure 3.1 Awareness of the CIR process in Oregon, 2010-2014



Closer inspection of the survey data shows that the proportion of voters “very aware” of the CIR dipped from 25% to 20%. That group is particularly important, because those choosing the “somewhat aware” scale point are freely admitting a foggy recognition of the CIR.

Table 3.1 Awareness levels for the Oregon CIR, 2010-2014

CIR awareness level	2010	2012	2014
Not aware	59%	47%	46%
Somewhat aware	26%	28%	35%
Very aware	16%	25%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Sample size (N)	111	323	403
<i>At least somewhat aware</i>	40%	52%	54%

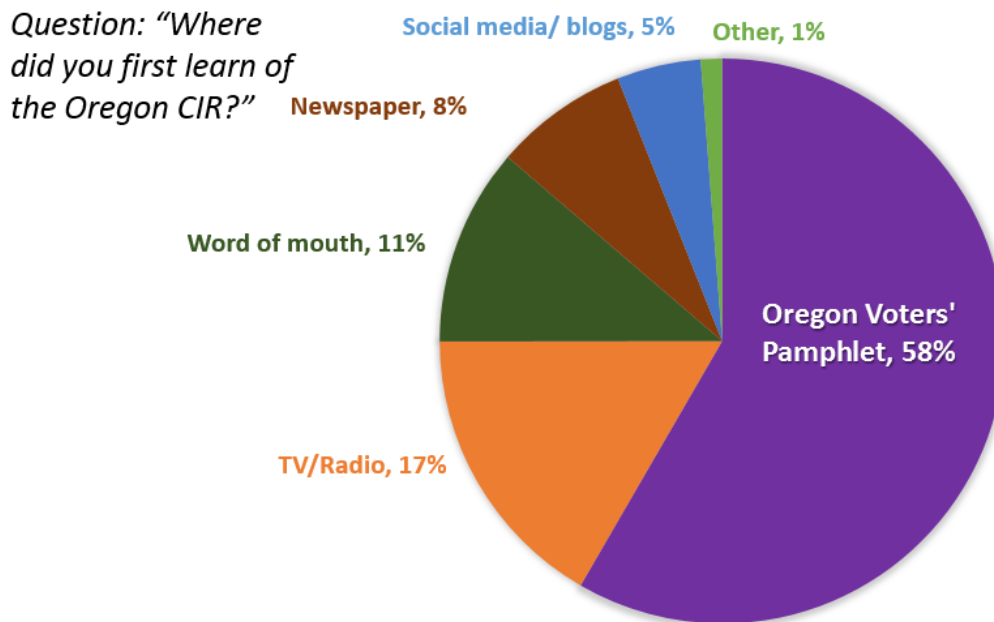
For the first time, in 2014, our phone survey included the question, “Where did you first learn of the Oregon Citizens’ Initiative Review?” As shown in Figure 3.2, 58% said that they learned of it from the

2010 because during the final two weeks, its interviewers had to conduct a Washington statewide survey at the same time that they completed their study of the Oregon CIR.

⁶³ Results are from telephone surveys of 111 likely voters in 2010, 323 in 2012, and 403 in 2014 (see Appendix C).

Voters' Pamphlet, 17% said it was radio/television, 11% said "word of mouth," 8% said newspaper, and the rest were spread across other categories (including just 2% on other online sources).⁶⁴

Figure 3.2 Where Oregon voters first learned of the CIR



Note. $N = 247$.

CIR Statement readers

In previous years and memos, we have presented CIR readership statistics in different formats and formulations. For this report, we chose to focus once more on just those respondents who had already voted. We also put a restriction on readership responses, such that one who acknowledges no prior awareness of the CIR cannot be counted as among those who have read a Citizens' Statement.⁶⁵ We also have simplified the analysis by aggregating across the two CIR issues from each year, such that we measure whether an individual read *either one* of the Citizens' Statements.

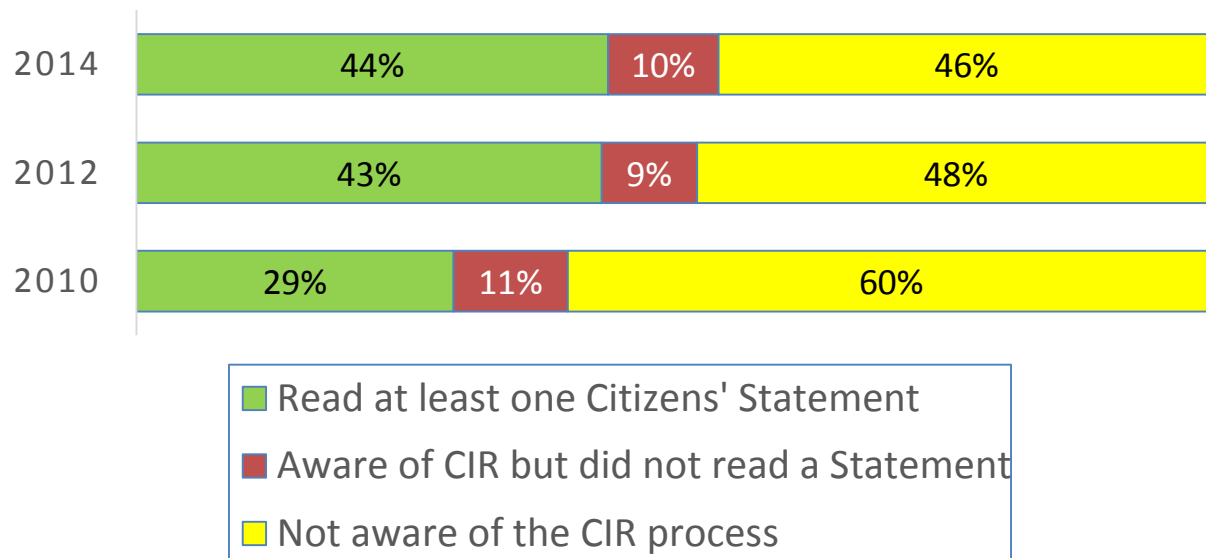
The point of such analysis is to find out the proportion of Oregon voters who know about the CIR and then choose to consult at least one of its Statements. Figure 3.3 breaks down Oregonians who had cast their ballots into three groups: those unaware of the CIR, those aware but not reading a Statement, and those who were both aware of the CIR and chose to read at least one of that year's Citizens' Statements. The proportion in the latter category rose from 29% in 2010 to 43% in 2012 and 44% in 2014. That result

⁶⁴ Regarding the CIR spreading by word of mouth, our online survey in Oregon (see Appendix C) included a question asking how often participants discussed what they read in the Reviews with other citizens. Roughly a third (33%) never did so, another third (32%) did so "once or twice," and the remaining 34% talked about the CIR materials with other people "a few" or "many" times.

⁶⁵ The skip logic used in the 2012 survey permitted asking those "not aware" of the CIR whether they had read one or the other Citizens' Statement from that year. In this analysis, those individuals are all counted as non-readers.

represents a large jump from the CIR's first year, but caution is advised because the relevant sample size from 2010 has a relatively large margin of error (i.e., +/- 12%).

Figure 3.3. CIR awareness and Statement use among Oregon voters who had already cast their ballots, 2010-2014

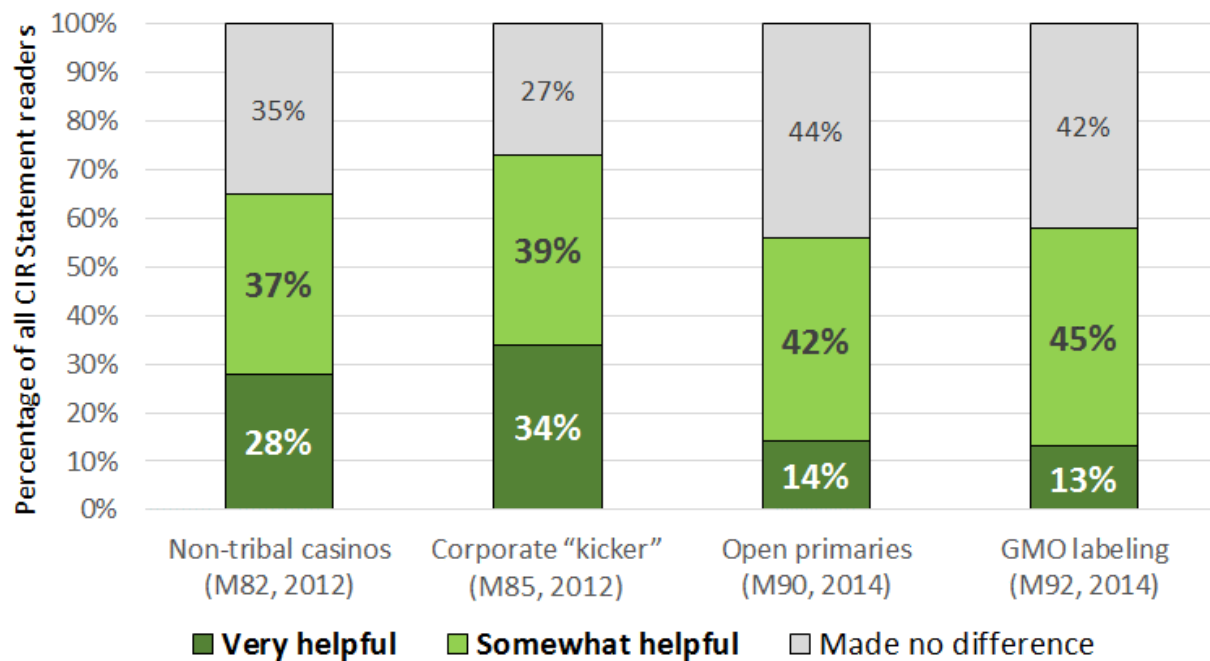


Note. Sample sizes were $N = 68$ (2010), $N = 250$ (2012), and $N = 200$ (2014).

One of the statistics underlying Figure 3.3 is the readership rate among those who were at least somewhat or very aware of the CIR. This proportion has been relatively stable since the CIR's inception, with 74% of those aware of the CIR in 2010 reading at least one Statement, compared to 83% in 2012 and 81% in 2014.⁶⁶

Though the readership for the CIR increased in 2014, the percentage of readers who rated the Citizens' Statements as at least "somewhat helpful" declined from 2012-2014. Figure 3.4 shows that the drop was from 65-73% in 2012 to 56-58% in 2014.

⁶⁶ The samples are large enough for 2012-14 to also compare readership rates among those "somewhat" versus "very" aware of the CIR. Those figures have not changed during the past two years, being 75% and 91% in 2012, compared to 75% and 89% in 2014. The 2012 survey's skip logic also permitted calculating a readership percentage for those "not aware" of the CIR, and fully 28% of those who said they had not previously heard of the CIR reported reading its Statement. That probably reflects response error, but it could also indicate a subgroup who interpret the CIR awareness question as asking whether they were aware of the CIR prior to reading one of that year's Citizens' Statement in the *Voters' Pamphlet*.

Figure 3.4 How helpful Oregon voters found the Citizens' Statements, 2012-2014

Question: "In deciding how to vote on [the measure], how helpful was it to read the CIR Statement?"

A variation on this question included in the 2014 survey asked how much information voters got from reading the Citizens' Statements (Table 3.2). This phrasing was developed because it gets more directly at the purpose of the purpose of the CIR, as a means of imparting trustworthy information. In 2014, most respondents rated the Citizens' Statements as "somewhat informative" (55% for M90 and 49% for M92), with roughly two-thirds in both cases finding them to be at least somewhat informative.⁶⁷

Table 3.2 How informative Oregon voters found the 2014 Citizens' Statements

Informativeness rating	2014: M90	2014: M92
No new information	33%	37%
Somewhat informative	55%	49%
Very informative	12%	14%
Total	100%	100%

Are CIR readers a special kind of voter?

For the 2014 survey, the CIR Commission had requested that we re-examine the predictors of Oregon CIR awareness, use, and helpfulness to see if those using the CIR are different from the rest of the statewide electorate. To answer that question, we conducted a regression analysis that aims to

⁶⁷ Minimum $N = 120$. Questions in the 2014 online survey (see Appendix C) also asked CIR Statement readers to recall how easy it was to understand the Citizens' Statements and whether they chose to discuss them with other people. The vast majority rated the statements as "easy to read" (68% for Measure 90, 73% for Measure 92), with fewer than 2% saying either was "very difficult to read."

“predict” various outcomes, such as becoming aware of the CIR, reading a CIR Statement, or finding such a statement useful or readable once one picks it up to read it. Regression analysis estimates the independent influence that comes from each of a set of related variables, and in this case, we used demographics that measure some of the important social and economic variations among Oregonians. Those with more education and income might be expected to differ from others because those variables are often associated with higher levels of civic engagement. We also tested for differences between men and women, between younger and older voters, and between those Oregonian voters who identified their ethnicity as “white” versus all other ethnicity identity combinations. (Sample size limitations necessitated the crude dichotomy, which still can pick up differences in studies of civic behavior.)

In the end, we found almost no significant predictors.⁶⁸ In particular, awareness and use were broadly distributed across the Oregon voting population in a way that was unassociated with one’s educational level, income level, age, sex, or ethnicity (at least, as measured herein). The only significant variable in any equation was age: Younger voters found the Measure 92 Citizens’ Statement more useful than did older voters, and they found the Measure 90 Statement more informative than did their older counterparts.⁶⁹

3.2 CIR Awareness and Use beyond Oregon

The preceding discussion focused on Oregon, where the CIR has existed since 2010 and it has an established means of distribution via the official Voters’ Pamphlet. To assess voter awareness of the three pilot CIRs held in 2014, we conducted separate surveys, and the results of these vary from findings in Jackson County that closely parallel those in Oregon to findings in Colorado and Phoenix that may suggest the need for a more precise measurement approach in those research sites unfamiliar with the CIR.

CIR pilot in Jackson County, Oregon

After weighting the Jackson County mail survey sample (see Appendix C), the total awareness of the CIR in Jackson County was comparable to figures seen for statewide CIRs in Oregon:⁷⁰ 13% said they were “very aware”, 33% “somewhat aware,” and 54% “not at all aware.” In fact, this survey also asked

⁶⁸ Sample sizes for some of the analyses were too low to treat nonsignificant findings as anything other than non-findings.

⁶⁹ The direction and size of the association with age was similar, but not quite significant, for the other two items in this set (i.e., the utility of Measure 90 and the informativeness of Measure 92). The significant semi-partial correlations were of modest size, from -0.21 to -0.25. Regression effectively parses out the unique effects of each variable, but when looking at age by itself (i.e., without controlling for the other variables), one can see the simple association between age and CIR assessments. For instance, 77% of voters under the age of 50 rated the Measure 90 CIR statement as at least “somewhat informative,” compared to 60% of those 50 and over. As for the other result, a majority (61%) of those under 50 rated the Measure 92 CIR Statement as “somewhat helpful,” whereas the majority (58%) of those 50 and over rated it as making “no difference.”

⁷⁰ Question for those in the control group: “A Citizens’ Initiative Review was conducted in Medford, Oregon April 27-30 on Measure 15-119, regarding genetically engineered plants. Prior to completing this survey, how aware were you that this Jackson County Citizens’ Initiative Review had been held?” For those in the experimental treatment conditions, this retrospective question was asked: “Before starting this survey, how aware were you of the Citizens’ Initiative Review panel on Measure 15-119 held in Jackson County (Medford) in April 2014?”

respondents if they were familiar with the 2010 and 2012 CIRs that were held, and roughly the same total percentage (48%) said they recognized those.⁷¹

The phrasing of the awareness question enabled respondents to also identify the source where they had found and read the CIR Statement on Proposition 15-119.⁷² After the *Medford Mail Tribune* ran a full copy of the CIR Statement, it's no surprise that this was where the vast majority (88%) learned of it first, followed by the Internet (11%), with all other sources accounting for only 0.5% of readings.

Of the entire sample, 18% reported that they had already read the CIR Statement on Measure 15-119 before taking the survey. Those who read it gave it positive reviews similar to those seen statewide in Oregon: 44% found it "somewhat helpful" and 24% found it "very helpful." (The comparable numbers for Oregon are shown in the Appendix at the back of this memo.)

Those who read the CIR Statement were also asked to assess each section of it. Overall, the ratings varied by section: On a four point scale, one of the two highest ratings were given by 63% on Key Findings (rating them as "mostly" or "completely" accurate), by 78% on the Statement's arguments in favor of Measure 15-119 ("strong" or "very strong"), and by 48% on the con arguments. There was one other interesting result about ratings of CIR Statement sections, and it is discussed at the end of the experimental section of this report.

CIR pilot in Colorado and Phoenix, Arizona

Even after using the weights for the online survey sample (see Appendix C), an impossibly high percentage said they were aware of the CIR:⁷³ 14% said they were "very aware", 41% "somewhat aware," and only 45% "not at all aware." The result suggested that some might have confused the CIR with the official voting guide in Colorado, which includes its own pro and con issue analyses. Among those who read a CIR Statement as part of our survey experiment (see Section 4), only 6% said they had been previously "very aware" of CIR, and that figure seems a more likely statewide estimate of the CIR's reach in a state where the Statement principally reached voters through free media coverage.

The weighted online survey sample for Phoenix had a similar result to Colorado, in that the estimates of CIR awareness sounded too high, not only to this report's authors but also to collaborating investigators at Arizona State University's Morrison Institute. When asked about the CIR,⁷⁴ 23% of respondents said they were "very aware", 39% "somewhat aware," and only 37% "not at all aware."

⁷¹ Forty-eight percent said "somewhat" or "very" in response to this question: "In 2010 and 2012, the State of Oregon sponsored a Citizens' Initiative Review, which wrote one page statements providing information on various ballot measures in the official Oregon Voters' Pamphlet. Prior to receiving this survey in the mail, how aware were you of the statewide Citizens' Initiative Review process?"

⁷² See previous footnote.

⁷³ Question wording: "In this year's Blue Book, for one of the statewide initiatives there is a one-page Citizens' Statement detailing the most important arguments and facts about each measure. It was written by a Colorado Citizens' Initiative Review panel. Prior to completing this survey, were you VERY aware, SOMEWHAT aware, or NOT AT ALL aware of the Citizens' Initiative Review?" That's an unfortunate wording error because it implies that the Statement appeared in the Blue Book, which it didn't in 2014. Those asked retrospectively got this question: "As part of this survey, you saw a Citizens' Initiative Review statement for one of the ballot measures in the Blue Book. Prior to participating in this survey, how aware were you of the statewide Citizens' Initiative Review process?"

⁷⁴ Question wording: "Earlier this year, the Morrison Institute organized a Citizens' Initiative Review to examine Prop 487. The citizens serving on the Review panel wrote a one-page statement detailing important facts and key

The ratings of the CIR by self-described Statement readers in both Phoenix and Colorado were as favorable, or more so, in comparison to Oregon. We choose to set those results aside, however, and will look for a better way to measure CIR awareness in future studies of cities and states where the larger population needs more context to distinguish the CIR from other forms of voting guides.

3.3 How Voters Read and Use the Citizens' Statements

To better understand the way voters handle, read, and use the Citizens' Statements, we contracted with Bentley University, which hosts a User Experience Center that has experience studying voting systems.⁷⁵ Elizabeth Rosenzweig led the research effort and conducted many of the interviews herself.⁷⁶

The sample we chose for the study consisted of a mix of CIR veterans and new users across two states and three ballot issues. In Oregon, 20 voters read the Citizens' Statement on Measure 90 (open primaries), and an equal number read the Statement for Measure 92 (GMO labeling). Half of those interviewees were chosen because they had used Citizens' Statements in the past, with the other half being novices. To compare the Oregon experience with a state considering adopting the CIR, another sample of 20 voters were interviewed in Colorado as they read the pilot CIR's statement on Proposition 105 (another GMO labeling measure).

Each session lasted approximately one hour and was video recorded. Facilitators followed a structured test script, which asked interviewees to review and provide feedback on the Statement they read during the session. Interviewees were also invited to relate that experience to how they prepare their ballots outside of the laboratory. Below are highlights from these videos, which show how voters experience using the Citizens' Statements *in their own words*.

In some cases, we investigated particular insights or concerns raised by the voters who took part in these testing sessions. Where appropriate, we interject corresponding survey data.

Theme #1: The conventional materials provided to voters are insufficient

Many voters complained about the materials put in front of them when they lack a Citizens' Statement. In the case of Oregon, the CIR analyzes only two ballot measures during the statewide initiative elections, which are held in that state only during even-numbered years. Interviewees complained that the official Ballot Title and full text of a given measure were sometimes hard to understand. Even if a person knew what his or her position was, it was sometimes confusing whether a yes or no would support that position. Sometimes voting "yes" actually means saying "no" to a law, and vice versa. One interviewee said that what's needed is "bigger typeface and less words...." What arrives in the Voters' Pamphlet is "too wordy.... The level of accessibility is not there" (P33).⁷⁷ Another interviewee said that sometimes the Pamphlet text has "a lot of science words, like WHOOSH...over my head" (P11).

In Colorado, where the CIR has never existed, voters get much of their information from television ads, which they recognize as biased. The ads can be overwhelming; as one voter pleaded, "Make it stop!"

pro and con arguments on the ballot measure. Prior to participating in this survey, were you VERY aware, SOMEWHAT aware, or NOT AT ALL aware of the Citizens' Initiative Review on Prop 487?"

⁷⁵ Selker, Rosenzweig, & Pandolfo (2006).

⁷⁶ The other facilitator was Lena Dmitrieva. This section is adapted from their report (Rosenzweig, Dmitrieva, et al., 2014).

⁷⁷ "P" numbers refer to the interview's location in the record of the usability tests. They are included here for future reference.

(P9). That state, however, has a more detailed default voting guide than most states—one that many Colorado voters refer to simply as “the Blue Book.” Most interviewees said that they used this guide, but many also said that the language in it ends up confusing them. As one voter said, it just “Doesn’t make sense to me” (P16). “Sometimes,” one interviewee said, “there are words where I wish they had a glossary or index definition kind of thing” (P3). Another wondered “how much of it is a waste of paper” because “it’s pretty dense, repetitive, and the layout is not engaging” (P18). One concluded, “When you can’t even understand what it says, there must be so many mis-votes” (P9). In sum, both Oregon and Colorado voters find conventional information sources limited, or misleading.

Theme #2: The Citizens’ Statements provide many voters a useful source of information

In Oregon, many of those interviewed had a clear conception of the Citizens’ Statement. They often noted that it served as a condensed version of the state voting guides. The CIR Statement provided simpler language and shorter length. One interviewee said that the Statement makes it possible to “decipher” the Voters’ Pamphlet. One noted, “[I] don’t feel as overwhelmed as [with] the booklet” (P40). Voters believed that the Statement “gave a lot more insights” (P6) because it “explains in layman’s terms” (P11) the ballot issues it addresses.

More generally, many Oregonians understood the purpose of the Review and what makes it work. The Review is “really trying hard to reach the general masses to keep them informed” (P33). A key to its effectiveness was that it was written by citizens, for citizens. As one interviewee said, the Statements are “written by people like me and not politicians” (P39). Moreover, “because the panelists are normal people and the statements are very direct” (P6). The result is “keeping interest groups in check” (P6).

We juxtapose those qualitative findings with assessments of past CIR Statements by those Statement readers who participated in our 2014 online survey in Oregon (see Appendix C). This subset of survey respondents who had at least some awareness of the CIR were asked to rate the overall quality of all six Statements produced by the CIRs held in Oregon since 2010, as shown in Table 3.3. Although many had to decline, owing to unfamiliarity with the measures, the results provide a useful point of comparison.⁷⁸ The table below skips the mid-point rating and just contrasts the percentages who rated each as either good or poor in quality. Acknowledging the very low sample size for 2010, the table shows that almost half of respondents typically give one of the two highest ratings (“good” or “very good”) and about one-in-six usually offer a “poor” or “very poor” mark. The correlations among all of these ratings were quite high, which means that individuals are holding generally favorable (or unfavorable) views of both past and present CIR Statements.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Question wording: “The Citizens’ Initiative Review has existed in Oregon since 2010. Below is a list of the Reviews that have taken place since the time you said you first became aware of them. Please rate the OVERALL QUALITY of each of these Review statements. If you have not seen a particular review, mark the ‘don’t know’ response.”

⁷⁹ The modest increase from 2010 to 2014 in the percentage of voters who recall Citizens’ Statements favorably might hearten those who hope to see the public appreciation for the CIR increase over time. A more straightforward interpretation, however, is that among those who have used the CIR Statements over the years, they have come to believe that the CIR process itself has improved since its inception. The findings from previous CIR surveys have shown variable results in utility ratings from one year to the next (e.g., Figure 3.3), but veteran users assess the CIR as a process that has improved steadily over time. Moreover, the differences among these years (and the sample sizes for those recalling the 2010 CIR) are not large enough to warrant strong interpretations either way.

Table 3.3 2014 Oregon voters' assessment of the quality of current and past CIR Statements

CIR Statement	Good/ Very Good	Poor/ Very Poor	N
CIR 2010 - OR M73 (MandMin) Statement	43%	8%	20
CIR 2010 - OR M74 (MedMJ) Statement	49%	15%	23
CIR 2012 - OR M82 (Casino) Statement	44%	24%	136
CIR 2012 - OR M85 (Kicker) Statement	47%	18%	131
CIR 2014 - OR M90 (Primary) Citizens' Statement	50%	13%	670
CIR 2014 - OR M92 (GMO labels) Statement	58%	15%	716

The twenty Colorado interviewees were all new to the very idea of a CIR, but most immediately recognized its value. Some interviewees said that reading the CIR Statement didn't cause a change of opinion, but it made them want to explore the measure further. As one said, "It raises more questions in my mind, which is a good thing" (P19). Other interviewees indicated that reading the CIR Statement changed their mind, or helped them form an opinion on the proposition. One said simply, "I feel more enlightened" (P5) on the issue, and another, who had turned in her ballot before the interview said flatly, "I wish I would've read this before I voted. I would have voted differently" (P9).⁸⁰

Many of the Colorado interviewees came to the view that more experienced Oregonians had already reached. They found the CIR Statement useful as a short summary of the measure with key points and pros and cons—essentially, a boiled-down version of their existing voting guide, which they call "the Blue Book," but with less legalese. Like the Blue Book, which includes a pro and con section, the CIR "gives both side of the argument" (P14), but by comparison, the Statement "is very clear" and "much easier to read" (P20). Some interviewees said it made them think differently about the whole experience of voting: "It makes me realize that there are available things that are a lot less cumbersome than some of the things that I've relied on. I'd be interested in seeing more of the CIRs" (P8). Another interviewee seemed optimistic that the Reviews were already becoming a regular part of Colorado elections: "Now that I see the [CIR Statement], [I] skip [the Blue Book] and do [the CIR Statement].... We need to promote that this is available and we need to have this for all measures" (P9). In fact, the CIR was only a pilot project in Colorado, not a regularly available resource—at least not yet.

Theme #3: Some voters don't know enough about the CIR to trust it, or they detect bias

The Colorado interviewees in this study expressed enthusiasm for the idea of a CIR, but in Oregon, the more experienced users of the Statements tempered their enthusiasm with practical suggestions for how their existing Reviews could be improved. Two primary reasons were given by those interviewees who were reluctant to place too much trust in the Citizens' Statements. Many interviewees expressed that they wanted more information about the panelists, specifically, who they were and how they were recruited. Many other interviewees were skeptical about the objectivity of sources of information the panelists received. As one interviewee said, "I don't know what they [the panelists] read – where did they get that?" (P4). More generally, the panelists wanted to know more about the CIR: "I like the idea, but it doesn't seem transparent" (P4).

⁸⁰ In 2014, Colorado joined Oregon and Washington by becoming the third vote-by-mail state. The interviews were scheduled for mid-October, and a few participants who signed up for the interviews had already voted at the time of their session with the interviewer. The Oregon sessions were conducted earlier, and none of the interviewees in that state had already voted when interviewed.

Some Oregon interviewees went further to say that they thought the Key Findings in the Statements could show bias. In the case of Measure 92 (GMO labeling), for example, one panelist thought using the phrase “eel-like organism” had a sensationalist tone (P9). Some interviewees reported that duplicated content between Key Findings and either the pro or con arguments makes the Key Findings appear biased in the corresponding direction. Some thought the con arguments were not so clearly opposed to the measure, whereas another thought the Statement was “one-sided, against the issue” and included “lots of pessimistic statements” (P22). More generally, many interviewees indicated that they wanted more numbers and concrete data, which would make the information seem more objective.

Those concerns prompted us to include in our online Oregon survey a series of questions about the Citizens’ Statements. First, we conducted a special study on the subgroup of survey respondents who had already voted but were not at all aware of the CIR process. We randomly assigned these respondents to read the Citizens’ Statement on either Measure 90 or Measure 92. Roughly a hundred survey participants spent at least a minute reading the Statement assigned to them, and afterward, they answered a series of questions.⁸¹ Results are shown in Table 3.4.

In both cases, participants said they knew enough about how the panelists were chosen, but a majority of respondents in both cases did not believe they had been provided enough information in the CIR Statement about who sponsored and organized the CIR. Respondents were also evenly split on whether they knew enough about how the panel was conducted.

As for assessing the Statements themselves, the results were similar across Measures 90 and 92, with only two differences in the ratings across the issues. First, readers found the Key Findings in Measure 90 to be more neutral (even then, only 38% gave it a “generally neutral” rating). For Measure 90, panelists were relatively evenly divided in sensing a bias for or against, but for Measure 92, 49% thought the Key Findings were stacked against the measure (compared to 30% seeing bias in the other direction).

Second, in both cases a plurality of those giving a guess recalled correctly how the panelists voted on their respective measure, but the proportion was much higher for Measure 90 (54%) than for Measure 92 (34%). When one includes in the total percentages those who dared not venture a guess because they were sure they didn’t remember, the figures are not as different (38% for Measure 90 vs. 28% for Measure 92), because fully 29% chose not to guess on Measure 90. That fact makes this difference harder to interpret, because that fact makes it unclear whether a strongly divided CIR vote is more memorable than a closely divided one.

This online survey also afforded the opportunity to ask Oregonians who knew about the Citizens’ Statements what they thought about the CIR more generally, now that they had a few years of experience with it. Between a third and a majority of respondents agreed with each of five reasons one might not use the Citizens’ Statements, though those agreement percentages were generally lower the

⁸¹ The introduction to this section read, “Although you have already voted, we would like you to offer an assessment of one of the Citizens’ Initiative Review statements created for this year’s election in Oregon. Please read the following statement on [Measure 90/92], then answer a few short questions about it. Note that the Review statement contains four sections: a summary of the Review process, key findings, arguments for the measure, and arguments against the measure. You will be asked three questions about each section.”

more familiar one was with the CIR.⁸² The reasons shown in Table 3.5 were presented in random order but are sorted from the most to the least plausible explanation for not reading the Statements.

Table 3.4 Assessments of Citizens' Statements read during the online survey by respondents who had voted without being aware of the Oregon CIR in 2014

Survey question	M90	M92
Citizens' Statement provided enough info about... (% answering "yes")		
how the citizens serving on the Review panel were selected	74%	66%
how the three-and-a-half day Review panel process was conducted	53%	49%
who sponsored and organized the Citizens' Initiative Review on [M90/92]	47%	48%
Key findings in the Citizens' Statement		
How accurate? (% rating as completely or mostly, vs. somewhat or not at all)	59%	68%
How relevant? (% rating as completely or mostly, vs. somewhat or not at all)	64%	66%
How neutral? (% rating as "generally neutral")	38%	22%*
PRO arguments in the Citizens' Statement		
How strong? (% strong or very strong, vs. weak or very weak)	69%	72%
How relevant? (% rating as completely or mostly, vs. somewhat or not at all)	56%	58%
How trustworthy? (% mostly or completely trustworthy, vs. somewhat/not)	40%	43%
CON arguments in the Citizens' Statement		
How strong? (% strong or very strong, vs. weak or very weak)	72%	64%
How relevant? (% rating as completely or mostly, vs. somewhat or not at all)	61%	52%
How trustworthy? (% rating as mostly or completely trustworthy)	49%	38%
Recalling correctly the vote taken by the panelists	54%	34%*
N	92	110

* indicates a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in ratings between the two groups.

To be clear, the explanations in Table 3.5 are not reasons voters gave for not reading Citizens' Statements themselves. The indirect phrasing of the question permitted voters to acknowledge potential problems with the CIR without having to embrace those concerns explicitly during the survey. Thus, the more important finding is not the absolute percentages for the different reasons in Table 3.5 but the *relative* percentages therein. Those responses that received the most agreement represent concerns about the CIR that strike the general public as most plausible.

Table 3.5 Plausibility of hypothetical reasons for declining to read a Citizens' Statement in Oregon, 2014

Reason voters gave for why others might NOT use the Citizens' Statements	Agree/ Strongly Agree
I view the world very differently compared to the people who write the Review...	57%
I had/have already made up my mind so I didn't need to read the Review...	51%
I don't appreciate the technical language used in the Review statements.	41%
The Review statements are unreliable information sources.	39%
The Review statements are too difficult to read and use.	33%

⁸² Question: "Below are reasons why a voter might NOT choose to read the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review statements. For each possible reason, please say whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree."

A final set of questions asked all online survey respondents (except those exposed to a Citizens' Statement in the experiment) to rate the importance of knowing key details about each CIR. They ranked six items, shown in random order, and the results in Table 3.6 show how consistent those ratings were regardless of how aware one had been of the CIR prior to taking the survey.⁸³ When asked to "rank the importance of each piece of information in judging the trustworthiness of the Citizens' Initiative Review statements," the highest priority was knowing who funded the CIR.

Table 3.6 Ranking of the importance of information about Oregon CIR by awareness level, 2014

Feature of the Oregon CIR	Not previously aware	Somewhat Aware	Very aware of CIR
The principal sources of funding for the Reviews	#1	#1	#1
Who organized and facilitated the Reviews	#2-3	#2	#2
Who testified before the Review panel	#3-5	#4	#2-4
How the Review panel conducted its deliberations	#4	#2-4	#3
The demographics of the Review panelists	#5	#5	#3-5
Where the Review panelists live	#6	#6	#6
N (total respondents in each group)	286	709	460

Theme #4: Voters were more interested in the content of the Citizens' Statements than in how CIR panelists voted

One special detail in an Oregon Citizens' Statement is the vote tally that shows how the panelists split on the measure at the end of their week of deliberations. Though there were variations on this in the 2014 CIR pilots, the basic idea is that voters might want to know how the panelists themselves intended to vote after spending four or five days studying a ballot measure.

In Oregon, most interviewees understood that the Statements showed how many panelists voted for and against the measures and liked knowing that result. Some interviewees, however, were unclear whether or not there was any overlap in terms of the findings. As one said,

"I assume they all had these statements to look at, to give a thumbs up thumbs down on. It seems too neat and clean to think that nine would choose these set of bullets and eleven would choose these without some sense of, in part, a middle that they all tended to agree on. Or, maybe there was a set of bullets that almost none of them [agreed on]?" (P7)

Many interviewees indicated that the panelists' votes did not affect their positions.

⁸³ Question wording: "The Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review is only successful if voters can trust the people and process involved in creating the Review statements. Some voters might want more information about the Citizens' Initiative Review process to appear in its Review statements to help them judge the reliability of those statements. Full details on each review already appear on the Internet, but it may be possible to provide more information in the printed Review statements, as well. Please RANK THE IMPORTANCE of each piece of information in judging the trustworthiness of the Citizens' Initiative Review statements. Use your mouse to drag and drop the items listed below to rank them, with #1 being the MOST important thing you need to know about the Review process, and #4 being the LEAST important." (There were six items to be ranked, so the reference to #4 as the least important was a typo. This was probably an innocuous error since the question presented respondents with all six items, randomly ordered, for them to rank.)

- “I really don’t care who is for it or against it. I just want the findings that they found.” -P3
- “It matters more what you vote than what other people vote.” -P11
- “Just because a lot of people think something doesn’t mean it’s right.” -P14

One interviewee worried how others might construe the balance of votes shown for a given CIR panel: “I think the majority/minority things... are actually really screwed up. I know that a lot of people just look at those words and want to side with the majority.... It’s the only way it’s weighted” (P19). Indeed, some interviewees whose views matched the minority of the panelists sometimes said that result made them feel less confident about their positions. “When I’m in [the] minority,” one said, “... am I missing the boat?” (P1).

In the surveys we have conducted on the CIR from 2010-2014, one consistent finding has been that many of those who read the Citizens’ Statements do not even recall the balance of panelist votes. Table 3.4 showed a similar result for persons answering survey questions minutes after reading a Statement for the first time.

Moreover, the direction of the panel vote is no guarantee of influence. In our 2010 phone survey, for instance, those reading the Citizens’ Statement on medical marijuana became more likely to oppose the measure, even though the panelists had split 13-11 in favor. That particular Statement led with a Key Finding that worried about the enforceability of the measure, and substantive concerns such as those appeared more influential than the balance of panelist votes.

Our 2014 online Oregon survey provided a direct test of the importance of showing the panelist vote, and results suggest it was not a critical piece of information. Those who had neither voted nor read the Voters’ Pamphlet at the time of the survey were shown a Citizens’ Statement on either Measure 90 or 92, and half within each group saw a Statement that had the panel vote removed.⁸⁴ A fifth group served as a control group and saw no Statement before answering the questions that followed.

To see if the difference in Citizens’ Statements worked as designed, a quick check tested voter inferences about how the panelists voted on each measure, using only those respondents who spent at least thirty seconds on the screen that showed them the CIR Statement. Recall that for Measure 90, the CIR panel opposed the measure on a 14-5 vote. A large majority (58%) of respondents not shown how the panel voted said they did not know the vote result; those who did venture a guess were spread out pretty evenly across possible outcomes.⁸⁵ By contrast, only 28% of those who read the Statement that included the panel vote were unsure, after the fact, how it had voted. The most common response (39%) was that “a large majority of citizen panelists opposed Measure 90,” with 7% recalling opposition by a smaller margin, 4% thinking the vote was even, and the remaining 21% having it backwards.

⁸⁴ One advantage of online surveys is screening out “readers” who don’t take any time to read the text put before them. For this test, a thirty-second minimum was placed on the experiment, such that one was not counted as having actually read the CIR Statement if one was not on the page for at least 30 seconds.

⁸⁵ Question wording: “Do you happen to recall the position taken by the Citizens’ Initiative Review panelists on [the measure], which [measure description]? To the best of your knowledge, which of the following was true?
 - A LARGE majority of citizen panelists FAVORED [the measure] - A small majority FAVORED [the measure]
 - Citizen panelists were EVENLY divided - A small majority OPPOSED [the measure] - A LARGE majority of citizen panelists OPPOSED [the measure] - Don’t know.

The result for Measure 92 was similar, in that those not shown the vote were left to guess (with 49% admitting they didn't know the vote result), whereas a modest plurality of those seeing the result recalled it correctly (26% remembering that "a small majority opposed Measure 92"). Given that the panelists opposed the measure 11-9, it is noteworthy that 15% of those shown the Statement with that tally recalled it as "a large majority" opposing the measure, and 27% recalled that the panel favored it.

Did seeing the panelist vote tally influence voters' own decisions? There were no net voting effects for Measure 92 (GMO labeling), and the voting effect for Measure 90 was simply between the control group and the two groups that read the Statement, with or without panelist votes showing. The control group was more favorable toward the Measure 90 (56% intending to vote "Yes") than were those who were asked how they would vote after reading the CIR Statement (44%). Once again, the result was not significantly different for those who saw the CIR panel's 14-5 split opposing Measure 90 than for those who saw the Statement without it.

Theme #5: The Statements inspire some to vote on measures they might have skipped.

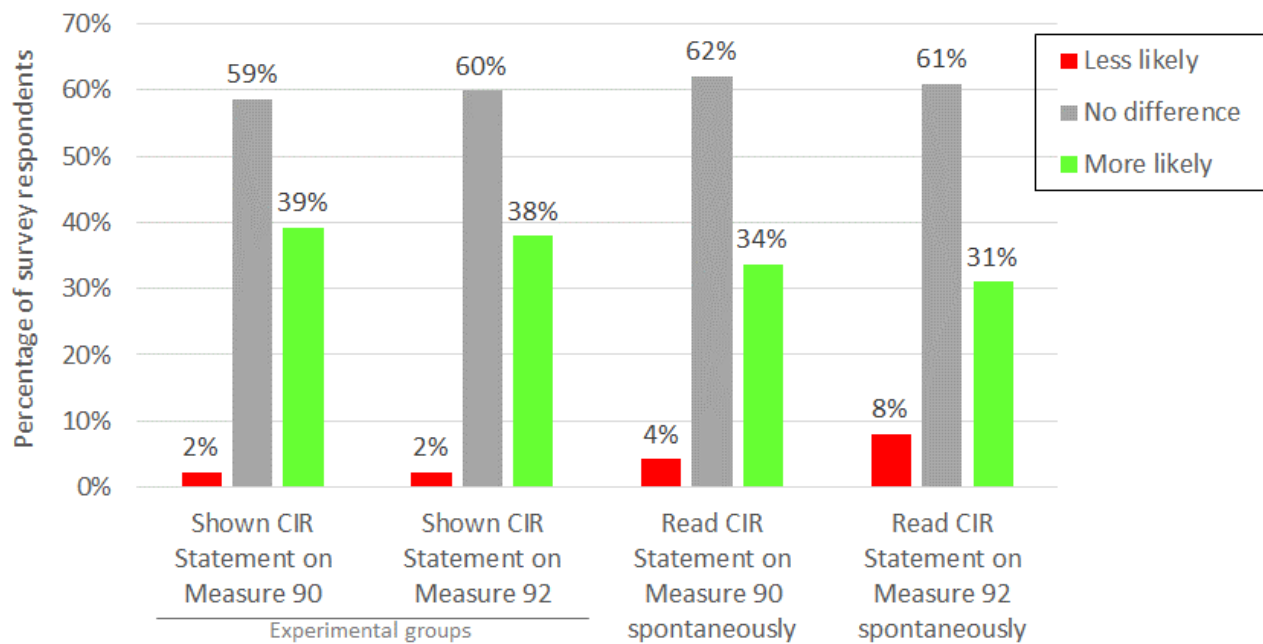
It did not surprise us to learn in the usability tests that some Oregon interviewees believed the CIR Statement reinforced their opinions and made them more confident in their vote. That translated for at least one interviewee, however, into encouragement to participate in the election itself: "It definitely makes me want to vote more because it helps you understand the issues" (P17).

Though this theme did not arise often, it was intriguing enough to investigate in the online Oregon survey. How many voters might, as a result of reading the Citizens' Statement, cast a vote on a measure that might have otherwise been left blank?⁸⁶ We approached this subject with a question wording that acknowledged the fact that voters sometimes pass over issues on their ballot—a phenomenon known as ballot "drop off." The question read, "Some people choose to skip over particular ballot measures while filling out their ballot. Did reading the Citizens' Initiative Review statement...make you more likely to MARK YOUR BALLOT on this particular measure, less likely to do so, or did it make no difference?"

Figure 3.5 shows the results from our online study for two different populations. The two sets of columns on the left of the figure are for those respondents who intended to vote but had not yet read the Voters' Pamphlet; they were shown the Citizens' Statement during the experiment, and nearly forty percent of them said reading it made them more likely to vote. The two sets of columns on the right are for voters who had already read the Citizens' Statement before the survey, and the result was similar, with a third being more likely to vote for having read the Statement.

⁸⁶ Thanks to David Brinker and Brendan Lounsbury for latching onto this idea and getting it into our survey.

Figure 3.5 Estimating the likelihood that reading an Oregon Citizens’ Statement increases or decreases the intention to vote on the corresponding ballot measure, 2014



3.4 Citizens’ Reflections on the Design of the CIR

The 2014 surveys differed from previous ones in that we included extensive questions about the design of the CIR itself. Our discussion of those results begins with the perspective of Oregon voters, then moves to those respondents in Phoenix and Colorado, who were exposed to a pilot CIR for the first time in 2014.

What aspects of the CIR Oregon voters consider essential

Because so many Oregonians were familiar with the CIR, we asked the subset who said they were “very aware” of the process what they thought were the most important features of it.⁸⁷ Respondents were asked to rank each of four features of the CIR from most to least important, and each item was shown in random order.⁸⁸

Though each feature was rated as the most important by at least one-in-six respondents, the clearest #1 choice was ensuring that no citizen dominated the discussion, as shown in Table 3.7. The quality of witness testimony came next, followed by panelists being explicit about their opinions and ultimately understanding their own reasons and values underlying one another’s views. Thus, for the average

⁸⁷ This was a subsample of 265 respondents, which was demographically re-weighted.

⁸⁸ Question wording: “The organizers of the Oregon Citizens’ Initiative Reviews have experimented with variations in the duration and design of the Review process to make it more efficient and cost-effective. In refining the Review’s procedures, please RANK THE IMPORTANCE of the following goals for the citizen panelists and the witnesses who testify during their deliberations. Use your mouse to drag and drop the four items to rank them, with #1 being the MOST important, and #4 being the LEAST important.”

survey respondent who is already very familiar with the CIR, the key is that there be a democratic discussion with strong information provided by witnesses. Less critical is how effectively the panelists express themselves and listen to one another.

Design preferences for citizens considering adoption of CIR

For the survey respondents in Phoenix and Colorado, we posed a bottom-line question to those who had learned about the CIR in the course of the survey: “Do you believe that Citizens' Initiative Review statements would be a useful resource to include in the Colorado Voters' Guide?” In Colorado, 83% of respondents said “yes,” as did 90% in Phoenix.

Table 3.7 Oregon voters' rankings of four features of the CIR process, 2014

Desirable feature of CIR deliberation	Ranked as...				
	#1	#2	#3	#4	Total
No citizen panelist should be able to dominate the discussion.	35%	22%	21%	22%	100%
Witnesses testifying before the Review panel must make sensible arguments backed up with evidence.	31%	30%	21%	19%	100%
Citizen panelists should express their positions clearly and directly to sure they are explicit about their opinions.	19%	30%	32%	20%	100%
By the end of the process, citizen panelists must understand the reasons and values underlying each other's views.	16%	18%	26%	39%	100%

That answer came, however, without knowing how a CIR might be crafted outside of Oregon. Thus, we asked a series of questions that juxtaposed different potential designs of a CIR and asked which was preferred. The results of those comparisons appear in Table 3.8. Across both states, voters prefer a CIR convened face-to-face, with both advocates and neutral witnesses present. They want to see a Statement that includes not only Key Findings, but also pro and con sections, along with a record of how the panelists themselves ended up voting.

Table 3.8 CIR design preferences among voters in Colorado and Phoenix, Arizona

Preferred design	Colorado	Phoenix
Larger and more representative (vs smaller/more deliberative)	48%	53%
Face-to-face preferred (vs online)	64%	67%
Should show how panel voted (leave out that detail)	65%	71%
Panel needs neutral and expert witnesses (vs just advocates or just neutrals)	65%	58%
Pro and con alongside findings (vs just key findings)	68%	67%

The respondents were divided on one question, however, which concerned the size of the CIR. This was a complex concept to phrase, so the complete question wording is shown below.

In designing a Citizens' Initiative Review panel, there is a tradeoff between smaller and larger panels. Criminal and civil juries typically use twelve citizens, and Citizens' Initiative Review panels have ranged in size from 18-24 citizens. However, some states have conducted large Deliberative Polls that bring together 400 or more people to study an issue. Smaller bodies are more cost effective and can engage in more thorough deliberation, but only the larger bodies of citizens can assemble a fully representative

cross-section of the population. In designing the Citizens' Initiative Review for [Colorado/Phoenix], which is more important to you—a smaller, cost-effective body that deliberates more thoroughly, or a larger deliberative body of citizens that is more representative of the [Colorado/Phoenix] population?

As Table 3.7 shows, both populations were, essentially, evenly split between smaller and larger bodies, when the choice was phrased in these terms. When thinking about the expansion of the CIR to larger states, such as California, it will be worthwhile to see whether opinion shifts in favor of larger CIR panels, or if half the population continues to be divided between small and large citizen panels. This also suggests that the size of the CIR panel needs to be explained effectively to voters who might be skeptical of such a small-scale process.⁸⁹

One might question whether the voters in an online survey know the nuances involved in such a choice, but when it comes to establishing public trust in a process such as the CIR, first impressions are important, as most voters will have as little (or less) introduction to the CIR than those taking these surveys. The public may believe large samples are necessarily better representations of public opinion, which they are in a statistical sense, all other things considered. Likewise, a “stratified” random sample may be a foreign, or suspect, concept. At the same time, when weighing the deliberative capacity of large bodies, citizens are unlikely to be aware of the successes of 21st Century Town Meetings, Group Decision Support Systems, and other technologies that help such large bodies work effectively.⁹⁰

CIR funding preferences

One additional design feature was included in the Colorado and Phoenix surveys. When asked what CIR funding scheme would work best, respondents were offered four choices, as shown in Table 3.9. Looked at one way, this suggests that a large majority favor an independent state commission, with a majority (59%) thinking that the commission should have partial or full public funding. Viewed another way, three-quarters of respondents think private funding should support the CIR, whether it operates as a state commission or as a not-for-profit.

Table 3.9 Preferred funding sources for CIR in Colorado and Phoenix, 2014

CIR funding design choice	Colorado	Phoenix
An independent state commission with public funding	25%	23%
An independent state commission with a mix of public and private funding	34%	36%
An independent state commission with private funding	13%	17%
A not-for-profit organization with private funding	29%	24%

In Oregon, the most pertinent funding question was whether the CIR should be expanded beyond its current capacity. In the 2014 phone survey, we asked about this subject by giving respondents two choices. In response, 70% of respondents preferred maintaining “private funding to conduct 1-2 Reviews

⁸⁹ Fishkin (2013), pp. 500-502.

⁹⁰ On 21st Century Town Meetings, see Lukensmeyer, Goldman, & Brigham (2005). Klein (2011) provides an example of a Group Decision Support System built specifically for deliberation. For a broader overview of such systems, see Limayem, Banerjee, and Ma (2006).

per election,” whereas 30% wanted to establish “state funding to conduct Reviews for all statewide ballot measures.”⁹¹

3.5 Summary

A majority of Oregon voters have become aware of the CIR process, and roughly two-fifths of the electorate read the most recent CIR Statements. Both figures represent an increase since 2010 but are comparable to statistics for 2012. A large majority of those who read the CIR find it useful, and many say that reading the CIR makes them more likely to vote on the ballot measures it addresses. CIR readers come from all across the voting public, with no particular group much more likely to read it than any other. Even non-readers give the Citizens’ Statements good marks, but both readers and non-readers alike want to know more about how the CIR is funded and how it operates.

⁹¹ When those results were broken down along party lines, the majorities favoring private funding of just 1-2 measures was 58% for Democrats, 70% for independents, and 81% for Republicans. Effective sample size for this question was 433, because 28% of the full sample of 600 declined to give an answer one way or the other.

Section 4. CIR Impact on Voters

One finding consistent between the 2010 and 2012 research reports was that reading the CIR Statement increased voters' knowledge levels. The 2014 surveys replicated that finding, principally through a variety of survey experiments. The reason we rely extensively on this technique is the power of inferring causation from experimental data. When respondents follow different paths through a survey, as a result of random assignment to different experimental conditions, we control for all the other variables that otherwise confound the inferences one might make about those who do or do not choose to read the CIR.

4.1 Experimental Results, State-by-State

The principal focus in the experiments below is on voter knowledge, but additional outcomes are also noted, when significant.

Oregon experiment: Citizens' Statements with and without panelist vote tallies

The main experimental design in this survey was distinct from previous online surveys on the CIR. Of those surveyed, many had already voted or read the Voter's Guide, but 954 (46%) were eligible to participate in our CIR experiment, which focused on the panelists' recommendations as a key feature. Each of these respondents was randomly assigned to one of three conditions: control group ($n = 324$), CIR Statement without panelist vote shown ($n = 298$), or full CIR Statement, i.e., including information on how the panelists voted ($n = 332$). Those three groups were further split, such that half went through the experiment regarding Measure 90 and half proceeded into an identical experiment on Measure 92.

For both issues, reading the CIR Statement (using the same minimum-reading time limits) had significant effects on voter knowledge relevant to the ballot measure it addressed.⁹² For Measure 92, the association between reading the CIR Statement and one's factual knowledge scores was substantially greater than the small effect of one's education level, but for Measure 90, the overall effect of reading CIR was comparable to the effect of prior education.⁹³ This is an interesting comparison in that it shows how the CIR Statement gets one "up to speed" relative to one's most educated peers. More on that particular finding will be shown later.

Jackson County experiment: Shifting order of pro and con arguments

One of the main features of this survey is an experiment, the design of which was unique for Jackson County. Of those surveyed, the vast majority had already voted or read the Voter's Guide, but 488 (11%) were eligible to participate in our CIR Statement experiment. Each of these respondents was randomly assigned to either a control group or one of three versions of the CIR Statement, as described below. In a nutshell, there are three tests in the experiment: Does reading the CIR Statement, in one of three different formats, cause: (1) changes in voting behavior on Measure 15-119, (2) changes in voter value tradeoffs relevant to the measure, or (3) changes in voter knowledge relevant to the measure? Effects were seen on both voting and knowledge, but not values tradeoffs.

The three CIR Statement formats concerned the way in which pro and con statements were incorporated into the single page CIR Statement included with the mail survey. Each version showed Key Findings on the left column of the sheet, whereas the right column either (a) showed Pro arguments

⁹² The effect was roughly the same regardless of whether the CIR panel vote was included in the Statement.

⁹³ This was true for both zero-order correlations and for coefficients in regression.

above the set of Con arguments, (b) reversed that ordering, such that Con arguments were on top, or (c) mixed the Pro and Con arguments under a single heading above the right-hand column.⁹⁴

There was no significant difference in voting outcomes among the three CIR treatment groups, but the combined effect of the three Citizens' Statements was to yield 75% support for the measure versus 63% in the control group. As was found in an online survey in Colorado in 2014 on GMO labeling, the effect of reading the CIR Statement on vote choice persists even after adding into a regression equation a set of predictors specifically tailored for explaining voters' views on the GMO issue—scientific knowledge, general environmental risk perception, and concern about food purity.⁹⁵ In other words, the CIR Statement's effect on voter preference was independent of those other factors likely to explain attitudes toward GMOs.

Reading the CIR Statement (using the same minimum-reading time limits) had significant effects on voter knowledge relevant to the ballot measure it addressed. All three of the CIR Statement conditions yielded higher knowledge scores than the control group. Across the three CIR versions, however, there was no significant difference.

One final experimental finding *did* yield differences among the three CIR Statement designs. The rating of Con arguments was significantly higher when the Cons came before the Pros in the Statement. When Pro came first (i.e., above the Cons), 63% of respondents rated Cons as "very weak" or "weak," but when Cons came first, the pattern reversed, with 61% rating them as "strong" or "very strong." The section where they were interspersed produced ratings between those two extremes.

Colorado experiment: Juxtaposing the CIR Statement with the Blue Book voting guide

Of those surveyed in Colorado, many had already voted or read the state's official voting guide (commonly called the Blue Book), but 815 (45%) were eligible to participate in our CIR Statement/Colorado Blue Book experiment. Each of these 815 respondents was randomly assigned to one of three conditions: control group (287), Blue Book without CIR Statement (250), or Blue Book with CIR Statement (278).

In a nutshell, there are three tests in the experiment: Does reading the Blue Book with or without the CIR Statement cause: (1) changes in voting behavior, (2) changes in voter value tradeoffs relevant to Prop 105, (3) changes in voter knowledge relevant to Prop 105. Effects were seen on both voting and knowledge, but not values tradeoffs.

As far as the first effect, one advantage of online surveys, however, is screening out "readers" who don't take any time to read the text put before them. Thus, a thirty-second minimum was placed on the experiment, such that one was not counted as having actually read the Blue Book, CIR Statement, or measure text if one spent fewer than 30 seconds on that page. When all three reading variables were put into a regression equation, reading the CIR Statement on Prop 105 made one less likely to support it. By contrast, reading the Blue Book had no effect.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ The column title in the third CIR condition was, "Key Arguments For and Against Measure 15-119." The arguments alternated from Pro to Con, starting with a Pro, followed by a Con, etc.

⁹⁵ The latter variables were generally predictive of voting choices on Measure 15-119, in their own right.

⁹⁶ For those interested in the net effects without the 30 second minimum, the control group was more favorable toward the measure (50% intending to vote "Yes") than were those who were asked how they would vote after reading the Blue with the CIR Statement (40.8%) or without it (41.4%). Likewise, the Blue Book reading groups

The effect of reading the CIR Statement persists even after adding to a regression equation a set of items specifically tailored for the GMO issue—scientific knowledge, general environmental risk perception, and concern about food purity. (The latter variables were all predictive of voting choices on Prop 105, in their own right.)

In every instance studied, reading the CIR Statement (using the same minimum-reading time limits) had significant effects on voter knowledge relevant to the ballot measure it addressed. In this case, however, the knowledge effects appeared comparable to those of reading the Blue Book.

Phoenix experiment: Choosing to read the CIR

In Phoenix, we used yet another experimental design. Of those surveyed, most had already voted, and most had already read the Voter's Guide, leaving just 224 who participated in our "selective exposure" experiment. Each of these 224 respondents were asked if they would like to learn more about Prop 487. Three separate questions asked if they'd like to read the summary statement (78% said yes), the full text of the measure (half said yes), and then the CIR Statement (76% yes). In a nutshell, the one significant effect obtained from this experiment was on voter knowledge: Those who read the Statement became better informed about issues pertaining to Proposition 487 (on pension reform).

4.2 Integrating Knowledge Impact across the Surveys

The knowledge gains the CIR produces can be shown one item at a time, as in Figure 4.1, which shows a significantly significant difference between those who saw the Citizens' Statements and the control group for a particular question on genetically modified food labeling.

To see more clearly the consistency of the findings from the 2014 surveys, Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of knowledge items answered correctly by respondents in each of the surveys.⁹⁷ The same results are shown in a more detailed tabular format (Table 4.1), which underscores the fact that all of these knowledge gains are statistically significant, for each of the ballot measures studied.⁹⁸

By combining all these data into a single dataset, with a combined sample size of 1,600, it is also possible to see more clearly the net impact of reading the CIR Statement in relation to the other ways in which voters differ from one another. In this case, we used the key demographics used to weight the samples as comparisons, plus a single item that measures the degree to which one regularly follows politics.⁹⁹

The results are shown in Table 4.2, and the only variables that did *not* predict knowledge scores were one's political party affiliation. Looking at the standardized regression coefficients ("Beta"), knowledge scores were higher for respondents who were older, had more formal education, male, and followed

were more likely to say they had "heard enough information" to know how to vote (56% in control vs. 79% for Blue Book, or 81% for Blue Book plus CIR Statement). This difference from the findings with the 30 second limit may suggest that the CIR Statement's effect separates itself from the other Blue Book content as voters devote more time to reading these documents.

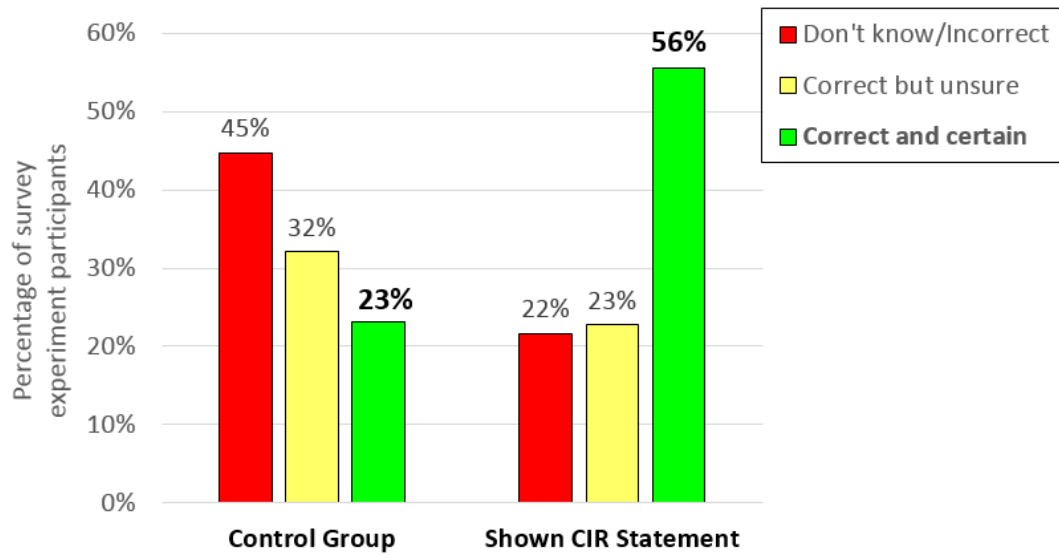
⁹⁷ The phone survey did not include a knowledge battery, owing to the high cost of doing so in that survey format.

⁹⁸ Answering "don't know" counts as not knowing the correct answer and is included in the analysis.

⁹⁹ Question: "Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. How often would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs? Hardly at all, only now and then, some of the time, or most of the time?"

politics *less often*. The largest effect of all, however, was reading the CIR Statement as part of the experiment.

Figure 4.1 Example of knowledge gains among Oregon survey experiment participants



Answers were in response to the following true/false statement: “The labeling requirements in Measure 92 DO NOT apply to alcoholic beverages, or prepared restaurant food.” The correct answer was “true”.

Figure 4.2 Percentage of knowledge items answered correctly by respondents on five different ballot measures, 2014

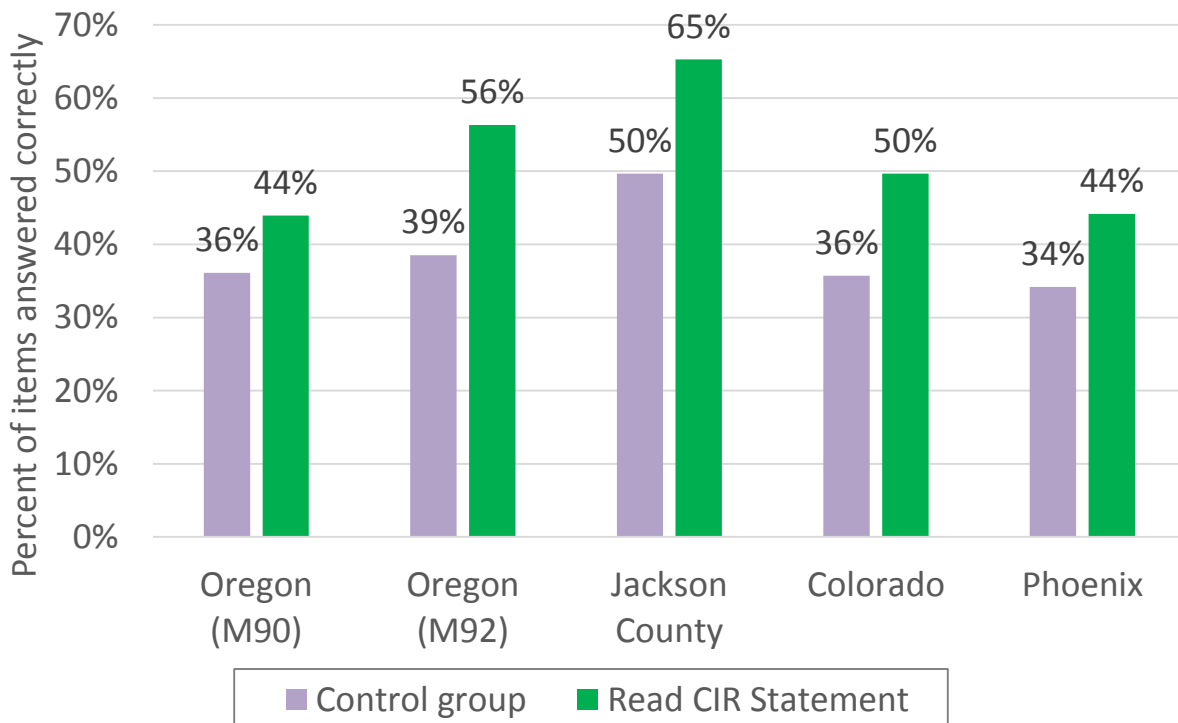


Table 4.1 Knowledge gains across five issues in three states, 2014

Survey issue and number of knowledge items	Experimental group	Mean score (% answered correctly)	Std. Dev.	Sample size (N)
Colorado 2014 - Measure 105 (GMO Labeling) – 11 items	Control group	.36	.16	287
	Read CIR Statement	.50	.21	104
Jackson County, 2014 - M15-119 (GMO Seeds) – 8 items	Control group	.50	.22	101
	Read CIR Statement	.65	.21	247
Oregon 2014 - Measure 92 (GMO Labeling) – 8 items	Control group	.39	.20	173
	Read CIR Statement	.56	.20	146
Oregon 2014 - Measure 90 (Open Primary) – 8 items	Control group	.36	.21	151
	Read CIR Statement	.44	.23	163
Phoenix 2014 - Measure 487 (Pension Reform) – 6 items	Control group	.34	.24	78
	Read CIR Statement	.44	.21	146

Table 4.2 Regression analysis of knowledge gains across five issues in three states, 2014

Variable in regression	B	SE	Beta (b)	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	.319	.027	--	11.713	.000
Dem (1 = Democrat, 0 = Independent)	.011	.012	.024	.893	.372
GOP (1 = GOP, 0 = Independent)	.010	.013	.021	.793	.428
Age category (3 levels)	.032	.007	.113	4.733	.000
Educational level (3 levels)	.044	.007	.144	6.117	.000
Female Sex (Female = 1, Male = 0)	-.035	.011	-.075	-3.154	.002
Follow Politics	-.037	.005	-.169	-7.186	.000
Read CIR Statement (vs. control group)	.129	.010	.299	12.668	.000

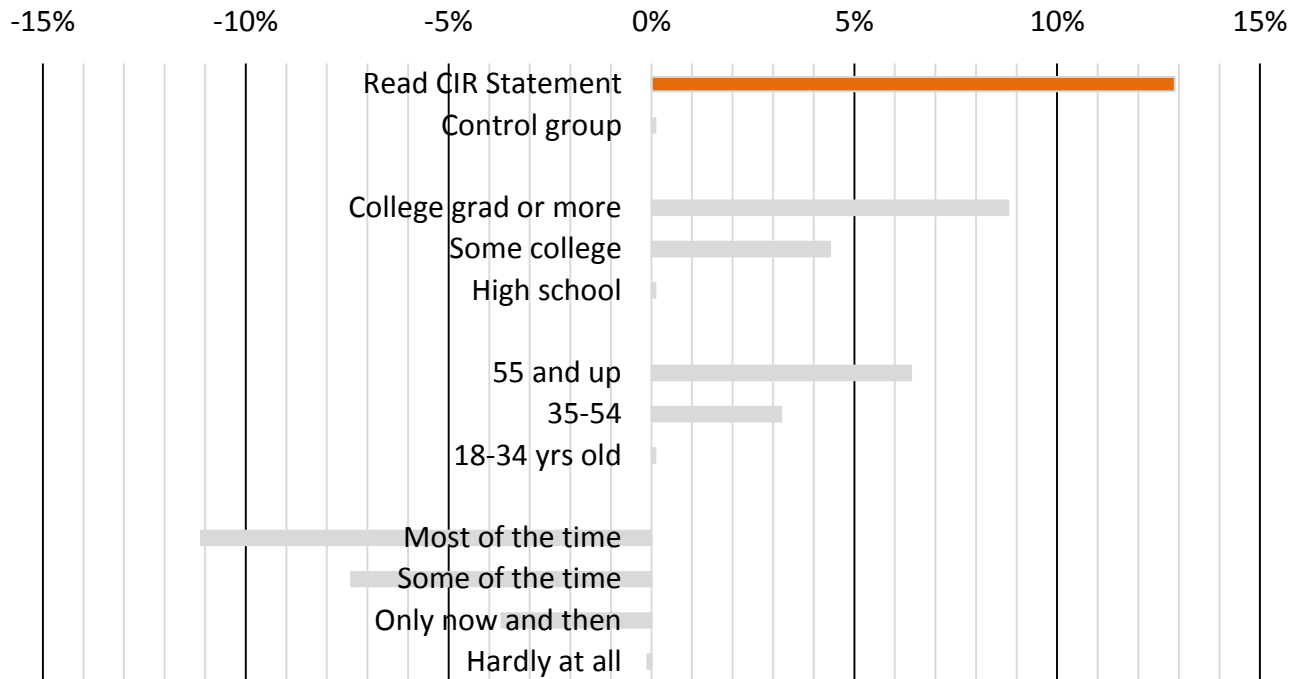
Note. B denotes the unstandardized regression coefficient, and SE represents the standard error of that coefficient.

To see these relative impacts graphically, Figure 4.3 juxtaposes the increases in knowledge scores predicted by the unstandardized regression coefficients from Table 3.10. This figure begins with the 12.9% increase in the correct answers given by those who read the CIR Statement, as compared to control groups. Below that, one can see that the net effect of the CIR Statement is greater than the total 8.8% gain achieved by moving from the lowest formal education category (high school or less) to the highest (college graduate or more). The only difference in knowledge scores comparable in size is the 11% *decrease* in knowledge as one moves from the lowest level of following politics (“hardly at all”) to the highest (“most of the time”).

Finally, note that we tried assessing knowledge two other ways and got the same results. One method excluded “don’t know” responses and just compared accurate versus inaccurate responses: The effect of reading the CIR Statement was again the strongest and had the same relationship to the effect size for education. A different method gave more credit for correct answers that respondents knew were “definitely” true/false, along with a greater penalty for having that same confidence in incorrect responses (see, for instance, the example in Figure 4.1). Again, reading the CIR Statement produced the

strongest effect, with the same size relative to education. In these other cases, following politics closely continued to be *negatively* associated with higher knowledge scores, just as shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Net increase in response accuracy on knowledge items pertaining to five ballot measures in three states, 2014



4.3 Disaggregating Knowledge Impact

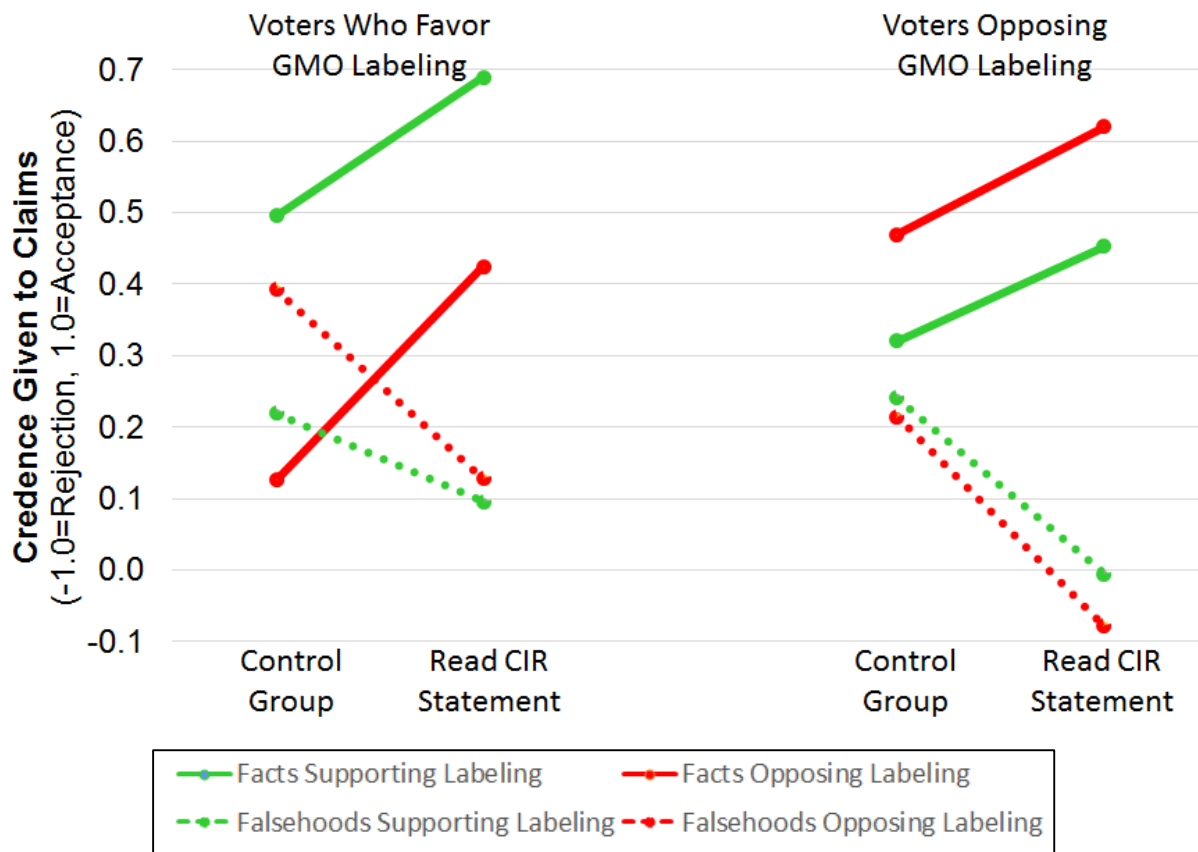
Future research will look more closely at whether the CIR Statement has a differential knowledge impact on different kinds of claims for varied audiences. One particular line of research that appears promising takes advantage of the fact that the true/false knowledge batteries in CIR surveys from 2010-2014 include both true statements and false statements, including ones that would—on balance—make people more or less likely to support the initiative in question. This careful balancing permits analyses such as those shown in Figure 4.4.

The full array of results in Figure 4.4 shows many interesting features of the CIR Statements' impact on knowledge. First off, across both those voters who favored or opposed Measure 92 (GMO labeling), reading the CIR Statement resulted in greater acceptance of true statements and less acceptance of false statements. This was true regardless of whether such statements implicitly supported or undermined the ballot measure.

The differences the figure shows are what suggests a promising line of investigation for revisiting other CIR issues. One's position on the measure is related to one's acceptance/rejection of statements in precisely the direction one would expect, in light of the biased information processing that goes into the

formation of public opinions.¹⁰⁰ In this respect, the CIR Statement tends to reduce bias but cannot eliminate it, at least with regard to voters' assessments of true statements relevant to Measure 92. When looking at falsehoods, however, the CIR Statement moves voters from both groups toward a score of "0", which indicates uncertainty about the statement. That suggests that it may be harder for the CIR Statement to get voters to reject falsehoods than to accept accurate statements about a given ballot measure.

Figure 4.4 Increase in acceptance or rejection of true and false statements broken down by voters' positions on Oregon Measure 92 (2014) and by whether those facts implicitly supported or opposed the idea of GMO labeling



4.4 Summary

The one consistent impact that the CIR has on the electorate is to raise voters' level of knowledge about the measures addressed by the Citizens' Statements. For the survey items employed, the Statements typically raise knowledge by 10-20%, and that increase is greater than the issue knowledge gap between those voters who have the least and most formal education (i.e., high school vs. college graduates).

¹⁰⁰ Generally, see Zaller (1992). For a recent reformulation emphasizing the cultural origins of bias, see Kahan et al. (2007).

Section 5. Practical Recommendations

This section offers practical suggestions for how to improve the CIR process. The first set of suggestions focuses on the CIR process itself, and the second focuses on the Citizens' Statement. Finally, a few recommendations concern how to strengthen the impact of the CIR on the electorate.

5.1 Deliberative Process Improvements

Maintaining analytic rigor

- 1. Stabilize the agenda prior to the event, train the facilitators on that agenda, and maintain the agenda during the process whenever possible.** One of the primary causes for lower levels of satisfaction for the 2014 reviews was instability in process design and/or errors in its interpretation or implementation by facilitators. Ensuring that facilitators understand and are committed to a pre-established and stable process design will help participants to stay on task and understand how agenda segments lead to the development of the Citizens' Statements. Healthy Democracy has expressed a commitment to more rigorous facilitator training on the CIR agenda and the importance of staying with it, and we underscore the importance of this commitment by making it our first and foremost recommendation.
- 2. Ensure that participants understand the purpose of each agenda segment and how it will lead to the development of the Citizens' Statements.** When participants are confused about the purpose of agenda segments or how the outcomes will be utilized, they spend time discussing the process rather than the initiative. Facilitators must ensure that they clearly articulate the purpose of each agenda segment and how it will lead to the development of the Citizens' Statement. If confusion remains after an adequate explanation has been given, facilitators should be firm in ensuring that participants stay on task and complete assigned goals within the allotted time frame.¹⁰¹
- 3. Provide advocates with improved training in addressing the participants.** Healthy Democracy has encouraged advocates to become adequately prepared to speak to participants as an audience of quasi-experts. Consultation with those who specialize in communicating scientific information to the public would assist in this directive. Organizers may offer sessions for advocate training and/or provide written or video instructions for how to best communicate in this specialized format. In the end, responsibility falls on the advocates themselves on this issue, but continual improvement of instructional materials for them will likely improve their performance at future CIR panels.

¹⁰¹ Two related issues are also essential for future CIR sessions. In 2014, Healthy Democracy tried to revise its process in time for the Colorado and Arizona panels to address two issues. First, it was essential to allow greater time for participants to develop claims independent of the claims offered by advocates. Opportunities for participants to develop additional claims should be built into small group deliberations directly after panel presentations. This task should be before and separate from segments in which panelists edit and prioritize pre-existing claims to ensure that participants have adequate time to develop additional claims. Second, process revisions undertaken in 2014 aimed to allow participants to edit advocate claims before prioritization. Participants should always be allowed to edit claims before they prioritize them. Ideally, participants would edit claims in small groups, work in large groups to synthesize such edits across small groups and then return to small groups to prioritize edited claims. This would prevent important claims from dropping out of the conversation simply because they are inaccurate or biased as written by the advocates.

- 4. Whenever possible, create an opportunity for participants to call neutral background witnesses.** Healthy Democracy has faced political and financial challenges when trying to work neutral witnesses into the CIR process. Whatever difficulties this process feature may pose, it is our judgment that the neutral witness component of the CIR should be included in the CIR process whenever doing so is politically and financially possible.¹⁰² Advocate presentations were often redundant by the third panel, and this time may be better spent hearing from experts not directly advocating for or against the initiative. Moreover, in 2010 and 2012, panelists always asked to hear from background witnesses, rather than hearing more from the advocates, when given the opportunity. One way this may be accomplished is by reducing the number of advocate panels from three panels to two panels. Neutral witnesses could then occupy the time currently allotted for the third panel. Advocates could speak to panelists at the first and third panel, with neutral witnesses speaking at the second panel. Ideally, these neutral witnesses would be selected by the organizers and not by the advocates.
- 5. Continue to allow advocates to sit before the CIR panelists at the same time.** In 2014, advocate presentations were adjusted so that the advocates from both sides sat before the CIR panelists during the same session. This allowed advocates to respond to and challenge claims made by their opponents, in a way that clarified points of difference and potential weaknesses in each side's main arguments. This likely assisted the panelists in weighing such claims against one another and should be used in future iterations of the CIR.
- 6. Allow participants to develop questions as the reviews progress, rather than only at the beginning of the process.** Participants should be allowed to develop questions prior to each session, rather than developing all of the questions at the beginning of the process. Panelists generally understand the initiative better as the review progresses and will likely pose more sophisticated questions as a result of learning from prior panel presentations and participating in group discussion.
- 7. Maintain exercises that ask participants to weigh competing claims against one another.** The 2014 process introduced opportunities for the panelists to directly compare claims by the advocate teams against one another. This allowed panelists to better understand points of contestation between the advocate teams and allowed them to develop more pointed questions with the goal of resolving such discrepancies.

Ensuring democratic discussion

- 8. Facilitate all small-group discussions.** The presence of facilitators in all small-group sessions better ensured that no panelists dominated those discussions and that participants reluctant to speak up had their voices heard. In addition, small group facilitators can keep the group on task and prevent them from losing focus or diverting their attention from task-oriented discussion.
- 9. Ensure that the process maintains adequate time for discussion.** Though we recommend that the facilitators be present for all small-group discussion, facilitators must be careful to allow time for adequate discussion before panelists begin voting on edits or to prioritize claims.

¹⁰² The CIR design that uses neutral witnesses requires the panels to extend over five days, rather than three and a half. That adds to the net cost of the CIR.

10. When possible, pair professional with local facilitators. As the CIR expands to more locations, organizers must ensure the presence of facilitators who can successfully communicate with the local population. A local facilitator may better understand the language or cultural norms of the community, and so long as they are effectively trained in the CIR process and paired with a facilitator who has experience with the CIR, the local facilitation should be effective. This will be of particular importance as the CIR seeks to include more diverse populations.

Maintaining informed and egalitarian decision making

11. Ensure that participants have adequate time to develop and edit the Citizens' Statement. Time to develop and edit the Citizens' Statements should be protected, within the constraints imposed by the legislation that authorizes the CIR.¹⁰³ Too often, time for such tasks is shortened due to additional time added to agenda segments earlier in the process. Process organizers should ensure that statement writing time is protected above all other agenda segments.

12. Fully develop the Key Findings before developing the Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure. Key Findings should be as fully developed as possible before the development of Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure. This will ensure less redundancy between the two sections and prevent panelists from editing the same claims for multiple sections of the Statement. The legislation enabling the CIR imposes constraints on panelist deliberation, and fiscal limitations on the total duration of the CIR also pose a challenge. That said, when the law and resources permit it, we believe the following agenda would help to ensure adequate time for writing and editing both sections. There are many ways the CIR could be structured effectively, but we believe this is one:

Prioritizing

- Participants prioritize claims developed and edited in small groups into an initial set of the top 20 proposed Key Findings.
- Combine any of the top 20 claims as seems reasonable to panelists. A simple majority should be required for the combination of any claims.
- Edit the top claims. (This will likely need to be done in small groups.) A simple majority should be required to accept any edits.
- Prioritize the edited claims with the goal of identifying the top ten claims. These ten claims will then serve as the Key Findings. Claims will need to have a supermajority of votes for inclusion.

Initial feedback

- Send the Key Findings to advocates for comment and feedback and to a neutral third party for plain language and content review (see Recommendations 17 and 18).
- Create a list of the claims not chosen for inclusion in the Key Findings as the beginning of the Arguments in Favor and Opposition sections.
- Allow participants to add any new claims they think pertinent to the list of potential arguments.

¹⁰³ In Oregon, the CIR legislation stresses the need for pro and con advocates to give feedback, and that imposes a constraint on the time available for panelist deliberation.

Writing and editing

- Break the participants into pro and con argument writing groups.
- Repeat the process for combining, editing, and prioritizing the claims used for the Key Findings, creating a list of potential pro arguments and potential con arguments.
- Allow groups to respond to the other group's arguments (see below for more details).
- Return to small groups to incorporate edits suggested by the other group.

Secondary feedback

- Send the pro and con arguments to the advocates and to a neutral third party for plain language and content review (see Recommendations 15 and 16).
- Break into small groups to incorporate advocate feedback into both the Pro and Con sections and the Key Findings.

Finalizing

- Vote on any final edits to the Key Findings, with a simple majority prevailing.
- Vote on the prioritization of the edited Key Findings. A supermajority is required for a claim to appear in the Voters' Pamphlet.
- Repeat the process for incorporating advocate feedback, editing, and voting on the Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure. A simple majority is required for a claim's inclusion in this section.

13. Continue to split the participants evenly into groups to write the Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure. Participants should continue to be split evenly among the groups writing the Statements in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure, rather than assigning participants to groups based on their voting preference. This new format allowed for a more equal distribution of participant abilities between the two groups and also appeared to lead to greater motivation to provide accurate, rather than convincing, arguments.

14. Continue to provide an opportunity for groups writing the Arguments in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure to provide feedback to one another. In 2012, the Statement writing process was modified to allow the groups writing the Statements in Favor of and in Opposition to the Measure to respond to the work produced by the other group. This design was largely maintained in 2014, though it was occasionally omitted due to time constraints. This segment should be maintained and protected, as it provided an opportunity to correct any factual inaccuracies and produce a clearer and more balanced statement.

15. Add a "plain language review" step to the Citizens' Statement editing procedure on the final day of the CIR. During this step, which should occur after the panelists have completed a first draft of the Citizens' Statement, the panelists should simplify the language of the draft. The revised draft should be tested for readability using one or more of the frequently used readability metrics (such as the Flesch-Kincaid, FOG, or SMOG tests used above). If resources permit, a person trained in plain-language techniques should advise the panelists during this step.

16. Add a substantive/formal review step to the Citizens' Statement editing procedure on the final day of the CIR. To detect accuracy- and content-related problems in Citizens' Statements, such as those described above, a neutral third party should be given the opportunity to review and recommend corrections to the first draft of the Citizens' Statement. Healthy Democracy piloted this feature in its Phoenix review, and we encourage continuing to develop it.

5.2 CIR Statement Design

The assessment of the Citizens' Statements in Section 2 prompts additional recommendations for improving Citizens' Statements.

Improving the content of Citizens' Statements

- 17. Include descriptions of alternative means for accomplishing the policy goals of the measure in the Citizens' Statement, if those means are discussed during CIR proceedings.** Descriptions of alternative means of accomplishing a measure's policy objectives help voters to assess the relative effectiveness and costs of the measure, as well as the feasibility of avoiding possible unintended consequences of the measure.
- 18. Include descriptions of other jurisdictions' laws similar to the measure in the Citizens' Statement, if those laws are discussed during CIR proceedings.** Descriptions of other jurisdictions' laws similar to a measure, and of the actual effects of such laws, help voters to gauge the likely effectiveness and to identify possible unintended consequences of a measure.
- 19. Include descriptions of possible bases for legal challenges to the measure in the Citizens' Statement, if those bases are discussed during CIR proceedings.** Descriptions of such bases help voters to determine how much time and effort to devote to considering a measure and inform voters about the provisions of a measure that are likely to remain in force after a successful legal challenge, and the likely effects of those provisions.
- 20. Include key definitions in the Key Findings section of the Citizens' Statement.** Citizens' Statements sometimes contain terms, such as "genetically modified organisms," with which the average reader may be unfamiliar. Panelists should be encouraged to include pertinent definitions within the text of the Key Findings so that readers may better understand the accompanying information.
- 21. Exclude policy recommendations from the Key Findings section of the Citizens' Statement.** The presence of policy recommendations in the Key Findings section is likely to be inconsistent with voters' expectations, to cause voters to be confused about the purpose of the Key Findings section, to question the nature of the other claims in that section, and to doubt the impartiality of the CIR panel or the CIR process.
- 22. Omit redundant assertions within sections of the Citizens' Statement.** Including redundant assertions within a section of the Citizens' Statement signals to voters that panelists failed carefully to vet the content of the statement, and wastes voters' time.

Formal aspects of Citizens' Statements

- 23. In all presentations of the CIR Statement, ensure that Key Findings precede arguments for and against.** Presenting the Key Findings before displaying the pro and con arguments encourages voters to reflect and deliberate about the measure and signals the credibility of the CIR panel to voters by disclosing the factual bases for the panelists' subsequent arguments supporting or opposing the measure. At times, online versions of the Citizens' Statements have deviated from this ordering.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ See the Citizens' Statement for Oregon Measures 90 and 92 of 2014 in the online edition of the *Voters' Pamphlet* (<http://www.oregonvotes.gov/pages/history/archive/nov42014/guide/english/votersguide.html>).

- 24. Label the content features contained in the Citizens' Statement.** To the extent this is possible given space limitations, the distinct content features of the Statements should have subheadings.¹⁰⁵ These should help voters to recognize the distinct relevance of each part of the statement, beyond the main headings that distinguish Key Findings from arguments For and Against. Such recognition is likely to assist voters in deliberating about measures, since those features seem to be associated with reasoning processes that citizens commonly engage in when weighing initiatives.¹⁰⁶
- 25. Use verb forms consistently to distinguish descriptions of intended effects from descriptions of likely actual effects of the measure.** Voters are interested in knowing the policy goals (i.e., the intended effects) of a measure, as well as its likely actual consequences. This knowledge enables voters to judge the likely effectiveness and the possible unintended adverse consequences of the measure. Accordingly, the Citizens' Statement should clearly identify and distinguish between descriptions of the intended effects and likely actual effects of a measure. One method of accomplishing this is consistently to use different verb forms to designate each type of effect.¹⁰⁷
- 26. Write the Citizens' Statement in simpler and more accessible language.** Results of readability tests reported above identify two factors that make the language currently used in most Citizens' Statements difficult to understand for those with lower educational attainment or lower reading skill levels: sentence complexity and word length. To address these issues, two tasks should be carried out. First, complex sentences should be split into shorter, simpler sentences. Second, wherever possible, shorter, more familiar words should replace longer and more arcane words.¹⁰⁸
- 27. Provide more information about the CIR process/panel atop the Citizens' Statement.** Many citizens unsure of the trustworthiness of Citizens' Statements want to know more about the process. Though this information can be provided online, most Statement readers will only learn what they read on the page presented in the Voters' Pamphlet. The most economical way to reassure voters may be to provide a short link to the information online, as a kind of promissory note that voters who want to know more about the details can access them readily. A full sentence about the conduct of the panel might also provide some reassurance regarding the deliberative rigor of the CIR. That description itself should also be in plain language (see Recommendation 26).

¹⁰⁵ The content features are described in section 2.3 above.

¹⁰⁶ Labeling could take several forms, such as placing the name of a feature in the margin to the left or right of each sentence that contains the feature, or reorganizing the parts of the Citizens' Statement so that each part contains subsections bearing headings naming one or more features (e.g., the Key Findings section could be reorganized into a subsections with headings such as "Goals of the Measure," "Likely Effectiveness of the Measure," "Possible Unintended Consequences of the Measure," "Examples of How the Measure Would Apply to Factual Situations," etc.).

¹⁰⁷ For example, intended effects could be indicated by use of the present tense (e.g., "This measure aims to increase public safety"), whereas likely actual effects could be indicated by use of the conditional or the future tense (e.g., "This measure would likely measurably increase public safety"; or "This measure probably will have little impact on public safety"). This use of verb forms complements the labeling approach described in Recommendation 24.

¹⁰⁸ Tools for use in simplifying language are available from Clarity International, <http://clarity-international.net/online-resources.html> and the Center for Plain Language, <http://centerforplainlanguage.org/reading/>. If law requires the use of certain complex language in the Citizens' Statement, CIR administrators should advocate for a legal amendment or exemption permitting use of more accessible language.

28. When the law permits it, use fewer words and a larger font in a more visually engaging layout. As the public's attention shrinks, even a one-page Citizens' Statement may benefit from less text in a larger font and more engaging format. A twenty percent reduction in total text may net more actual reading by drawing in additional readers, who make it to the end of the Statement rather than disengaging part-way through. The online Statement readers in our survey often raced through the Citizens' Statements, and though they gained information, if the panel had to prioritize even more carefully its most essential findings, the net result could be a gain in voter knowledge.

5.3 Increasing electoral impact

- 29. The CIR still needs a more robust public information campaign, both in Oregon and in any other state/municipality that adopts it.** Changes to the CIR process and Statement will have maximum impact if the Statement reaches a wider population. The fact that nearly half the Oregon electorate remains unaware of the CIR suggests it has a much larger potential audience. Either Oregon or one of the new CIR adopters should experiment with a more concerted public outreach effort to see how many voters can find their way to the CIR. Doing so is a logical next step after investing the effort into the CIR itself.
- 30. Public descriptions of the CIR should emphasize its features, not just its outcomes.** Voters want to know more about the CIR process itself, from how it is funded to how panel deliberations are conducted. The public's trust in this process hinges not merely on the quality of Citizens' Statements produced, but also on the public's understanding of the CIR process. This is not a question of transparency, since detailed information about the CIR is already accessible online. Rather, it is a question of publicity for the process itself, beyond the distribution of its Citizens' Statements.
- 31. Outreach roles could be developed for both CIR panelists and others initially invited to participate in the CIR.** The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly encouraged the citizen participants in that process to serve as "ambassadors" who could reach out to the wider public and explain the findings of that body's deliberations.¹⁰⁹ The CIR panelists could potentially play such a role, though care must be taken not to overextend the responsibilities of those reluctant to do more than serve in a deliberative capacity. Moreover, the CIR recruits from a large pool of citizens initially invited to participate, and that larger public body could be invited to follow more closely the CIR deliberation and spread the word about the process.
- 32. The CIR would benefit from a more visible endorsement by nonpartisan public officials.** The CIR stands apart from any partisan or political process, but it is connected to the normal operation of government and elections. After all, the CIR Statement is situated in the Voters' Pamphlet. Particularly when implemented for the first time in new states, the CIR would benefit from a more visible endorsement of the process by nonpartisan public officials, such as local county clerks.
- 33. Stronger media partnerships may be possible and effective.** Pilot CIR projects held in 2014 were effective to the extent that they were publicized by state and local media, since their Citizens' Statements were not included in official voter guides. Even when the CIR becomes a legally established process, it would benefit from a more active partnership with media, who could publish the Statements and provide more context to the deliberations and the process.

¹⁰⁹ See Warren and Pearse (2008).

5.4 Future Research

This report contains detailed information about the 2010-2014 CIR panels and Statements, but much more work remains to be done, and some of these findings will be developed for scholarly publication. (For a summary of past publications, see Appendix D.) The extensive CIR projects in 2014 effectively doubled the dataset available for investigating CIR deliberation and impact, and anyone reading this report who wishes to learn more about this research or contribute to the analyses of these data can contact the report's authors directly.

In addition to new research ideas introduced in this report (e.g., Section 4.3), projects currently being considered for future CIR research include a more careful analysis of those individuals recruited for CIR panels who do not ultimately participate. The question of participation rate has not been a focus in previous evaluations, but it merits more careful scrutiny. One concern relates to those individuals who wish to participate but cannot manage to do so, given their life circumstances. Another relates to those individuals who refuse the invitation and whether they possess characteristics that differentiate them in a meaningful way from those who do volunteer to serve on CIR panels. Another point of interest with these individuals is whether the mere invitation to participate arouses their interest in the election, or in the CIR itself, and thereby increases their likelihood of participating in the election, or even reflecting more carefully on the choices on the ballot, particularly those analyzed by CIR panels. An experimental approach could even test the efficacy of involving these non-panelists in an online process, a method that was employed in the Australian Citizens' Parliament.¹¹⁰

Another likely line of inquiry adjusts the experimental survey approach to look at ways of assessing the public's trust in the CIR process. One approach would vary the description of the CIR to add or subtract salient details about the process. Voters surveyed in 2014 indicated that they might trust the CIR more if they better understood its design, and this experiment could clarify which design features are most important. The findings of such a study would be useful for crafting Citizens' Statements, which can devote only so much space to such background information about the CIR process.

Another experiment could test trust in CIR factual findings by challenging those with unsubstantiated counterarguments by critics in the survey itself. One of the purposes of the CIR is to give voters unvarnished information about a ballot measure, but that information does not arrive in a vacuum. How likely are voters to accept the CIR's findings when those get challenged—even without substantiation—by critics that the voter would otherwise be inclined to believe?

Meanwhile, many other CIR-related research papers proceed apace, based on transcripts and surveys from 2010-2014. Future CIRs will add to these inquiries, but it is possible that the data collection efforts in future years may be somewhat more lean, owing to the difficulty of assessing fully every CIR and the need for even a large research team to catch up with the data already collected. With this in mind, priorities in future years will be on daily/end-of-week surveys (but without follow-up surveys months or a year later), videotaping of CIR sessions (but without full transcription), and only brief phone surveys (to track CIR awareness/use) complemented by more narrowly focused online survey experiments.

As we did in our 2012 report, we conclude this one by expressing appreciation to everyone who has made this larger research program possible. Our university and foundation partners (see Appendix A) have sustained this effort alongside our many undergraduate, graduate, and faculty colleagues. Healthy Democracy, the State of Oregon, and others have made the CIR a transparent process with the

¹¹⁰ Sullivan and Hartz-Karp (2013).

aspiration that our research can only help in the refinement of the CIR. The CIR panelists themselves also get credit for completing our surveys, with a remarkable response rate still at 100% during panels. We hope that our analyses and reporting of these data continue to warrant the participation of all who make their ongoing collection possible.

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Appendix A: Research Funding

The principal source of funding for the CIR research has been the National Science Foundation. Its two large grants and one small grant have contributed \$642,000 to this research effort, a figure that includes the indirect costs charged by various public universities. Other funding sources have combined to provide an additional \$150,000, as detailed below.

- Gastil, J. (2015). Principal Investigator, The **Democracy Fund**. "2015-2016 Citizens' Initiative Review Study and Reporting." (\$75,000)
- Knobloch, K. R. (2014). Principal Investigator, **National Science Foundation** (Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences: Decision, Risk and Management Sciences, NSF Award #1357444, Amendment 001). "A Multi-State Investigation of Small Group and Mass Public Decision Making on Fiscal and Scientific Controversies through the Citizens' Initiative Review: Research Experiences for Undergraduates Supplement." (\$6,000)
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- Gastil, J. (2013). **Pennsylvania State University** Social Science Research Institute. Award for summer workshop bringing together researchers investigating the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review. (\$5,000)
- Gastil, J., & Knobloch, K. (2012). Joint learning agreement (research contract) with the **Kettering Foundation**, with 76% of the budget allocated to Pennsylvania State University and 24% to Colorado State University. "Examining Deliberation and the Cultivation of Public Engagement at the 2012 Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review" (\$30,000).
- Gastil, J. (2010). Principal Investigator, **National Science Foundation** (Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences: Decision, Risk and Management Sciences and Political Science Programs, NSF Award # 0961774), "Investigating the Electoral Impact and Deliberation of the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review" (\$218,000).
- Gastil, J. (2010). Principal Investigator, **University of Washington** Royalty Research Fund. "Panel Survey Investigation of the Oregon Citizen Initiative Review" (\$40,000).

Appendix B: Detailed Report Cards for 2014 CIRs

The grades shown in the “Summary Evaluation” section summarized more detailed grades that the research team assigned the 2014 CIRs, plus those given in the 2010 and 2012 CIR reports. The more detailed 2014 grades are shown below.

Criteria for Evaluating Deliberation	Oregon MSR 90 (Open Primaries)	Oregon MSR 92 (GMO Labeling)
Promote analytic rigor		
Learning basic issue information	A-	B
Examining of underlying values	A-	B
Considering a range of alternatives	A-	B+
Weighing pros/cons of measure	A	B
Facilitate a democratic process		
Equality of opportunity to participate	A	A
Comprehension of information	B+	B
Consideration of different views	A-	A-
Mutual respect	A	A
Produce a well-reasoned statement		
Informed decision making	B+	B
Non-coercive process	B	B+

Criteria for Evaluating Deliberation	Jackson County MSR 15-119 (GMO Seeds)	Colo. Prop 105 (GMO Labeling)	Arizona Prop 487 (Pension Reform)
Promote analytic rigor			
Learning basic issue information	A	A-	A
Examining of underlying values	B	B	A-
Considering a range of alternatives	B	A-	A-
Weighing pros/cons of measure	A	A-	A
Facilitate a democratic process			
Equality of opportunity to participate	B	A	A
Comprehension of information	B	B+	A-
Consideration of different views	A-	A-	A
Mutual respect	A	A	A-
Produce a well-reasoned statement			
Informed decision making	B+	A-	A-
Non-coercive process	A-	B	A-

Appendix C: Research Method

This appendix presents many relevant details about the research method used in this study. The appendix begins with an overview of the survey methods used in Sections 3-4, then presents the details of the usability study in Section 3, followed by the observational and survey data used in Section 1.

CIR Surveys

Note that some of the fields below are blank because online survey panels don't have response rates, per se. Those surveys use a large pool of people willing to take part in online surveys. Screening questions are used to remove people not taking the survey conscientiously, and geographic or other filters are used to make sure they target the correct population.

Year	Medium	Method	Target Pop.	N	Surveys completed	Response rates*	Pct. by cellphone	Provider
2010	Phone, rolling	Random-dial	OR reg. voters	1,991	Aug 30-Nov 1	9% (RR4)	Not known	Washington Survey Center (Seattle, WA)
2010	Online, two-wave	Survey panel	OR reg. voters	971**	Aug 5-11 & Oct 22-Nov 1	--	--	YouGov/Polimetrix
2012	Phone	Random-dial	OR likely voters	800	Oct 25-Nov 5	4% (RR3) 23% (COOP3)	12%	Elway Polling
2012	Online	Mass email to random sample of voter list	OR likely voters	1,539	Oct 4-Nov 5	3% (RR4)***	--	Penn State Survey Research Center
2014	Mail	Postal mail to random sample of voter list	Jackson County, OR likely voters	3,487	May 10-June 9	20% (RR3)	--	MDC Research (Portland, OR)
2014	Phone	Random-dial	OR likely voters	600	Oct 31-Nov 2	3% (RR3) 55% (COOP3)	20%	DHM Research (Portland, OR)
2014	Online	Survey panel	OR intending to vote	2,077	Oct 16-Nov 7	--	--	Qualtrics
2014	Online	Survey panel	CO intending to vote	1,816	Oct 16-Oct 27	--	--	Qualtrics
2014	Online	Survey panel	Phoenix, AZ intending to vote	843	Oct 16-Nov 3	--	--	Qualtrics

* These response rate types are described in full detail by the American Association for Public Opinion Research in its 2008 "Standard Definitions" guidelines, which are available online at http://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/AAPOR_Main/media/MainSiteFiles/Standard_Definitions_07_08_Final.pdf

** This N completed both surveys in the two-wave panel.

*** 60,000 emails were sent out to respondents, but based on invalid email returns, we estimated that approximately 20% of the emails matched to voter records (obtained as a merged data file by the Penn State Survey Research Center from a commercial vendor) were non-working or mis-matched to individual voters at the time of the survey.

Usability Testing

The Bentley University User Experience Center conducted this study in collaboration with our research team, and they provided the details on the implementation of their interviews with voters. Investigators tested the Citizens' Statements and some additional materials designed to provide information to voters about ballot measures with 40 participants over four days in a field research lab in Portland, Oregon, and with 20 participants over four days in a field research lab in Denver, Colorado.

- Test sessions were one-on-one.
- All sessions were video recorded.
- Each test session was approximately 60 minutes long.
- Test facilitators followed a structured test script.
- Participants were asked to review and provide feedback on various elements of the Citizens' Statements and their experiences when they are deciding how to vote.
- Usability issues were observed during testing.
- Participants completed a survey at the end of the session ($N=60$ responses), the details of which are not included in this report but are available on request.

CIR Observation Team

Each CIR since 2010 has had two or more researchers present to observe the event live and to ensure the recording of high-quality audio/video. Observers take detailed notes during the event, make codings on each segment of the CIR agenda, and discuss challenges and achievements with one another during each break. There has been continuity among observers such that each CIR after the initial one in 2010 has had at least one experienced observer present, and usually two. This method has enabled us to maintain a consistency in evaluation across the nine CIR panels held during the past five years. Below is a list of all of the CIR observers from 2010-2014.

Year	Date	Ballot Measure	Issue	Size	Location	Research observation team
2010	Aug 9-13	M 73	Sentencing	24	Salem, OR	Gastil, Knobloch, Reedy
2010	Aug 16-20	M 74	Marijuana	24	Salem, OR	Gastil, Knobloch, Cramer
2012	Aug 6-10	M 85	Kicker	24	Salem, OR	Gastil, Knobloch, Richards
2012	Aug 20-24	M 82	Casinos	24	Portland, OR	Knobloch, Richards, Feller
2014	April 27-30	M 15-119	GMO Seeds	20	Medford, OR	Knobloch, Kropczynski
2014	Aug 17-20	M 90	Top-Two Primary	19	Salem, OR	Knobloch, Bull
2014	Aug 21-24	M 92	GMO Labels	20	Salem, OR	Knobloch, Bull, Brinker
2014	Sept 7-10	Prop 105	GMO Labels	20	Denver, CO	Knobloch, Bor, Sprain, Schmitz
2014	Sept 18-21	Prop 487	Pension Reform	20	Phoenix, AZ	Bull, Brinker, Black

CIR Panelist Surveys

At the end of each day, the research team administers a brief questionnaire (two sides of one sheet of paper) to the CIR panelists, a simple daily check-in that has obtained a near-perfect 99% response rate. On the last day, the response rate has remained equally high for a more detailed questionnaire that asks not only for that day's assessment but for questions about the entire week of CIR deliberation. Below is an example of that questionnaire, given at the 2014 Phoenix, Arizona CIR.

Phoenix CIR — Proposition 487 — Day 4 Evaluation Participant ID _____

Were the facilitators fair? Did the facilitators demonstrate a preference for either side?

1	2	3	4	5
The moderators favored those in SUPPORT		The moderators favored NEITHER side		The moderators favored those in OPPOSITION

How equal was the time given to both sides today?

1	2	3	4	5
Those in SUPPORT received more time		Both sides had EQUAL time		Those OPPOSED received more time

On a scale of one to five, how important a role did YOU play in today's panel discussions?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all Important		Moderately Important		Extremely Important

Would you say you had sufficient OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS today?

Definitely No	Probably No	Unsure	Probably Yes	Definitely Yes
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When experts or other CIR participants expressed views different from your own today, how often did you consider carefully what they had to say?

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Almost Always
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How often do you feel that other participants treated you with respect today?

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Almost Always
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How often did you have trouble understanding or following the discussion today?

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Almost Always
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How often today did you feel pressure to agree with something that you weren't sure about?

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Almost Always
-------	--------	--------------	-------	---------------

If you did feel pressure to agree, please provide a brief description of why or from where you felt pressured.

How well did the CIR STAFF perform in providing you with the support you needed to engage in the CIR process?

Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Excellent
-----------	------	----------	------	-----------

How satisfied are you with the KEY FINDINGS that the CIR panel decided on and wrote?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL Satisfied		SOMEWHAT Satisfied		VERY Satisfied

How satisfied are you with the ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR statement?

1 2 3 4 5
 NOT AT ALL Satisfied SOMEWHAT Satisfied VERY Satisfied

How satisfied are you with the ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION statement?

1 2 3 4 5
 NOT AT ALL Satisfied SOMEWHAT Satisfied VERY Satisfied

Compared to the amount of information you knew about this measure yesterday, how much more do you know about this issue after today’s deliberations?

I am more CONFUSED about the measure I understand the measure about the SAME I understand the measure a LITTLE better I understand the measure MUCH better
 How much more information do you need to confidently make a good decision on whether to support or oppose this measure?

I need a lot more information I need a little more information I already have enough information

For the next questions, circle the answer that reflects how the CIR was conducted THIS WHOLE WEEK. A goal for this week was to learn enough about the measure to reach an informed decision. Do you believe that you learned enough this week to make an informed decision?

Definitely Not Probably Not Unsure Probably Yes Definitely Yes

Looking back over the past 4 days, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the CIR process?

Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

One of the aims of this process is to have the staff conduct the Citizens’ Initiative Review in an unbiased way. How satisfied are you in this regard?

Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Neutral Satisfied Very Satisfied

Please rate the performance of the CIR process on each of the following criteria.

Examination and summarization of important information about the measure.

Very Poor Poor Adequate Good Excellent

Consideration of the values and deeper concerns motivating those IN FAVOR of the measure.

Very Poor Poor Adequate Good Excellent

Consideration of the values and deeper concerns motivating those OPPOSING the measure.

Very Poor Poor Adequate Good Excellent

Weighing the most important arguments and evidence IN FAVOR OF the measure.

Very Poor Poor Adequate Good Excellent

Weighing the most important arguments and evidence OPPOSING the measure.

Very Poor Poor Adequate Good Excellent

During breaks and outside the CIR meeting room, some panelists have had conversations with each other about the ballot measure. How much influence did those informal talks have on your views during the CIR process?

I DID NOT PARTICIPATE in such discussions	I participated but was NOT INFLUENCED	Those conversations influenced me A LITTLE BIT	Those conversations influenced me A GREAT DEAL
---	---	--	--

If you participated in any outside conversations, which of the following were you doing in those conversations?
Please CHECK ALL that apply.

- Exchanging new information
- Clarifying information I had already learned
- Sharing my opinions with others
- Considering opinions different than my own
- Swaying the opinions of others
- Agreeing with panelists who shared my views
 - Developing or writing KEY FINDINGS and ADDITIONAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS
 - Developing or writing arguments IN FAVOR
 - Developing or writing arguments IN OPPOSITION

Thinking back over this past week, on which evenings do you recall spending time with other citizen panelists?
CIRCLE ALL that apply.

Sunday Monday Tuesday

At this point, how STRONGLY CONNECTED to your fellow citizen panelists do you feel?

Not at all Weakly Moderately Strongly Very Strongly
Connected Connected

During break time or after hours, some panelists have conducted their own research on the ballot measure. Please circle the answer that best represents the amount of outside research that you conducted.

I DID NOT conduct outside research	I conducted a LITTLE BIT of outside research	I conducted A LOT of outside research
---------------------------------------	---	--

If you did conduct outside research, please indicate how much influence this outside research had on your views about the measure.

I conducted outside research but was NOT INFLUENCED	I conducted outside research and was influenced A LITTLE BIT	I conducted outside research and was influenced A GREAT DEAL
---	---	---

For the following questions, we wish to remind you that the information you provide in these daily feedback surveys is strictly confidential. Participant identifiers are removed once data are recorded, and you will not be identified personally with any of the responses given.

At the end of the CIR process, what is your position on Proposition 487?

Strongly Support Somewhat Support Not sure/ Undecided Somewhat Oppose Strongly Oppose

How confident are you on your position on the measure?

NOT AT ALL Confident SOMEWHAT Confident VERY Confident

If you had to make your position on the measure known at the end of the CIR would you vote yes, no, or undecided?

Yes No Undecided

If you had to make your position known at the end of the CIR and could only select yes or no, which would you choose ?

Yes No

With respect to your choice to support or oppose the measure, on which day did you decide how you would vote?

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday

Using the five-point scale below, which of the following best describes how you made your final decision this week?

1 2 3 4 5
 I represented MY OWN views I represented EQUALLY myself AND the people of Phoenix I represented the PEOPLE of PHOENIX

If a person who does not know much about the measure that you studied reads the Citizens’ Initiative Review statement on it, how do you think they would choose to vote on the measure?

Definitely AGAINST Probably AGAINST Not sure/ Undecided Probably IN FAVOR Definitely IN FAVOR

Please briefly explain the strongest argument that you heard in favor of the measure.

Please briefly explain the strongest argument that you heard in opposition to the measure.

How much CONFIDENCE do you think SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS had in your panel’s ability to produce a strong and reliable Citizens’ Statement?

NO Confidence VERY LITTLE SOME A LOT COMPLETE Confidence

Some panelists entered this process with no prior experience with this issue, while others had some relevant prior experience with this issue. How about you? Do you have any previous personal experience with this issue?

Yes, I do. No, I do not.

If you answered yes and feel comfortable sharing your experience, please provide a brief description of your own relation to this issue. Remember that all the answers you provide in this evaluation are strictly confidential. What was your motivation to attend the CIR? (Please check all that apply)

I was interested in the topic.

- I like to volunteer in my local community
- I was looking for a chance to get involved in the political process.
- I was motivated by the payment incentive.

Some people leave processes like this feeling the same as when they came. Others leave feeling differently about government, themselves, and other citizens. How about you? Do you think that this process has changed you? If so, please describe how you might have changed.

CIR processes will be held in the future for upcoming initiatives. What part of the CIR process would you recommend that the project staff change?

The following questions are simply for demographic purposes. We wish to remind you that the information you provide in these daily feedback surveys is strictly confidential.

Please check the box or boxes that best represent your employment status.

- Employed, more than 40 hours per week
- Out of work, looking for work
- A homemaker
- Employed, working 1-39 hours per week
- Self-employed
- A student
- Out of work, NOT looking for work
- Retired
- Unable to work

What is your approximate combined household income?

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,000
- \$50,000 to \$75,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or More

In the future, members of the staff will be interested in hearing your feedback about the review process, would you be interested in serving on a committee tasked with evaluating the Phoenix CIR?

Very Interested

Somewhat Interested

Not at All interested

After you leave, members of the research team would like to interview you regarding your experience at the CIR. With which of the following kinds of interview would you be okay? CHECK ALL that apply.

- A phone interview
- A questionnaire completed online
- I would not be comfortable being interviewed
- An in-person interview
- A paper questionnaire mailed to you

From all of us on the research team and from the project staff, THANK YOU for your help with the CIR evaluation.

Appendix D: Publications and Papers Directly Relevant to the CIR

Reports published on the CIR process

Knobloch, K., Gastil, J., Richards, R., & Feller, T. (2013). [Official 2012 CIR Evaluation Report for the Citizens' Initiative Review Commission](#). Assesses the quality of deliberation and electoral impact of the two CIR panels held in Oregon in 2012.

Gastil, J., & Knobloch, K. (2010). [Official 2010 CIR Evaluation Report](#) given to Oregon legislature on December 16, 2010. Assesses the quality of deliberation and electoral impact of the two CIR panels held in Oregon in 2010.

Academic articles and book chapters on the CIR process

Knobloch, K., & Gastil, J. (In press). Connecting micro-deliberation to electoral decision making: Institutionalizing the Oregon CIR. In Anna Przybylska (Ed.), *Deliberation: Values, processes, institutions*. New York: Peter Lang. Describes the development of the CIR as a formal part of election law.

Warren, M., & Gastil, J. (2015). [Can deliberative minipublics address the cognitive challenges of democratic citizenship?](#) *Journal of Politics*, 77, 562-574. Argues that processes such as the CIR and the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly could play a trustee role for citizens who seek reflective information and deliberative voting cues.

Gastil, J. (2014). [Beyond endorsements and partisan cues: Giving voters viable alternatives to unreliable cognitive shortcuts](#). *The Good Society*, 23, 145-159. Demonstrates how the CIR addresses problems in the initiative system by providing substantive and influential critiques of proposed legislation.

Gastil, J., Richards, R., & Knobloch, K. (2014). [Vicarious deliberation: How the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review influenced deliberation in mass elections](#). *International Journal of Communication*, 8. Explains how the CIR influences the electorate by way of detailed and relevant one-page assessments of ballot initiatives.

Knobloch, K., & Gastil, J. (2014). [Experiencing a civic \(re\)socialization: The educative effects of deliberative participation](#). *Politics*. Shows that citizen panelists in the CIR, and the Australian Citizens' Parliament, report experiencing profound shifts in their civic attitudes, which they attribute to participating in these public events.

Knobloch, K., Gastil, J., Richards, R., & Feller, T. (2014). [Empowering citizen deliberation in direct democratic elections: A field study of the 2012 Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review](#). *FACTS Reports*, 8. Provides a concise academic evaluation of the 2012 Oregon CIR.

Gastil, J., & Richards, R. (2013). [Making direct democracy deliberative through random assemblies](#). *Politics & Society*, 41, 253-281. Theorizes the different ways that random-sample bodies of citizens, such as the CIR, can improve the initiative and referendum process.

Knobloch, K., Gastil, J., Reedy, J., & Walsh, K. C. (2013). [Did they deliberate? Applying an evaluative model of democratic deliberation to the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review](#). *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 41, 105-125. Evaluates the 2010 Oregon CIR.

Conference presentations and unpublished works

Feller, T., Reedy, J., & Black, L. W. (2014, November). *Ready... break! How informal talk during breaks can help or hinder the deliberative process*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association.

Gastil, J. (2014, November). *Three approaches to measuring democratic deliberation in public meetings: Observer codings, participant self-assessments, and holistic expert judgment*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association

Knobloch, K. R. (2014, November). *Experimental democracy: The growth of deliberative governance in the U.S. and abroad*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association.

Richards, R. (2014, November). *Debating legislative intent: How lay citizens discern policy objectives in ballot initiatives*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association.

Gastil, J., Knobloch, K. R., Kahan, D., & Braman, D. (2013, November). *Deliberation across cultural cognitive divides: A study of cultural bias in public forums*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association.

Gastil, J., & Richards, R. (2013, November). *Symbolic-cognitive proceduralism as a robust justification for democratic deliberation*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association.

Knobloch, K. R., Barthel, M., & Gastil, J. (2013, June). *Emanating effects: The impact of microlevel deliberation on the public's political attitudes*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association.

Archer, L. (2012, June). *Evaluating experts: Understanding citizen assessments of technical discourse*. Paper presented at the conference of the Great Plains Society for the Study of Argumentation.

Richards, R., & Gastil, J. (2012, November). *Legislation by amateurs: The role of legal details and knowledge in initiative deliberation*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association. [Available at SSRN](#).

Gastil, J., Knobloch, K., Reedy, J., Henkels, M., & Walsh, K. C. (2011, November). *Hearing a public voice in micro-level deliberation and macro-level politics: Assessing the impact of the Citizens' Initiative Review on the Oregon electorate*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association.

Knobloch, K., & Raabe, R. (2011, November). *Exploring the effects of deliberative participation through panelist self-reports*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association.

Richards, Robert C. (2011, November). *Legal narrative in the citizens' panel: Identifying theories to explain storytelling in a small group deliberation about ballot initiatives*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association. [Available at SSRN](#).

Critiques of initiative process that reference remedies akin to the CIR

Gastil, J., Reedy, J., & Wells, C. (2007). [When good voters make bad policies: Assessing and improving the deliberative quality of initiative elections](#). *University of Colorado Law Review*, 78, 1435-1488.

Gastil, J., Smith, M. A., & Simmons, C. (2001). [There's more than one way to legislate: An integration of representative, direct, and deliberative approaches to democratic governance](#). *University of Colorado Law Review*, 72, 1005-1028.

Early theoretical works conceptualizing processes like the CIR

John Gastil, [By popular demand: Revitalizing representative democracy through deliberative elections](#). Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2000. Provides a rationale for using randomly-selected citizen panels to review candidates for public officials, but it also identifies CIR-like panels on ballot measures as the best place to start such reforms.

Ned Crosby, [Healthy democracy: Bringing trustworthy information to the voters of America](#). Edina, MN: Beaver's Pond Press, 2003. Provides a detailed blueprint for how a CIR-like process could operate and explains how it could help improve democracy.