



HOW WELL ARE WE DOING ? ITALIAN STUDENTS RATE SCIENTISTS AND THE POTENTIAL OF STUDIES IN GEOSCIENCES

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In this study we present the results of a poll conducted on secondary school students (age 14-19) aiming at estimating the trust of the young Italian citizens in the geoscientists and their studies. The sample is very small, being limited to about 150 students living in two regions of northern Italy, and therefore cannot be considered representative of the whole nation. However the information, that have been collected directly in schools before conferences or laboratories, can be used for a rough picture of the level of trust of a part of the society towards the Geosciences.

The poll contained very few questions. In fact the form was organized in three sections only: the first to collect age and region of the compilers, the second to know about the sources students usually use to get info about catastrophes and natural phenomena and the last aiming at estimating the trust towards the scientists and their studies.

As expected, students get their information mainly from the internet (about 40%) in its various forms (social media, Wikipedia) and TV (31%). However newspapers (17%) and schools (10%) still represent a significant fraction of sources of information.

In regard to the trust in science, some 87% believe that scientists are reliable but only 73% consider their research also useful. Only less than 5% declare that both scientists and their studies are not reliable and not useful.

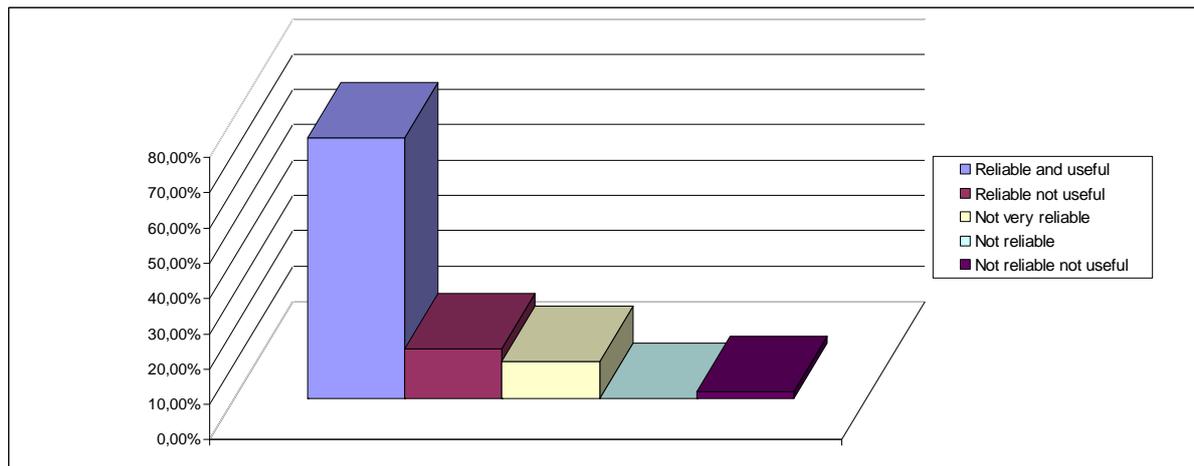


Figure 1. Histogram showing the trust in geoscientists and their studies.

Finally, about 75 % of the sample believe in the potential of future studies in Geoscience to help the society face natural catastrophes.

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It must be remarked that the regions where the poll took place were not hit by main earthquakes in the last years; it would be interesting to enlarge the results to a wider community, including also more seismic hazardous areas or regions recently hit by a major earthquake.

Additionally, it would be necessary to estimate the bias introduced by the fact that the poll, although anonymous, is conducted before a scientific talk given by scientists. This may in fact introduce a sort of “respect” that in turn could influence the answers.