

Rossi, Maurizio and Ettore Scappini. 2013. "Possiamo ancora dirci cristiani? La volatilità della partecipazione individuale alla messa." [Can we still call ourselves Christian? The inconsistency of individual Church attendance]. *Polis* 27(3):363-394.

Abstract:

In this paper we will analyse the data from surveys carried out in Italy between 1997 and 2005 as part of the Iffi panel. We will focus in particular on statements about frequency of churchgoing given by panel members over the years and show that they are characterized by a significant degree of inconsistency. We will show that this interesting but unexpected result can also be found in many other international panels and therefore cannot be attributed to bias resulting from the methodology adopted in the panel. Furthermore, we will see that individual inconsistency is generally not associated with paths of progressive rapprochement to or estrangement from religion and/or its practices. Instead, it is a form of «discontinuity» in frequency of churchgoing in its own right. Our analysis will then lead us to conclude that inconsistency and discontinuity are not the result of inappropriate response behaviour by interviewees and that they run through the main social segments (gender, age, education and area of residence). This characteristic pattern of mass attendance, which concerns at least 50-60% of the population, does not appear to take shape as an intermediate form of religiosity between regular churchgoers and non-churchgoers. Instead, it seems to signal the existence of a different type of religiosity.

Keywords: church attendance; discontinuity in mass attendance; inconsistency in mass attendance; panel; secularization.