

## How Much Government—Devolution

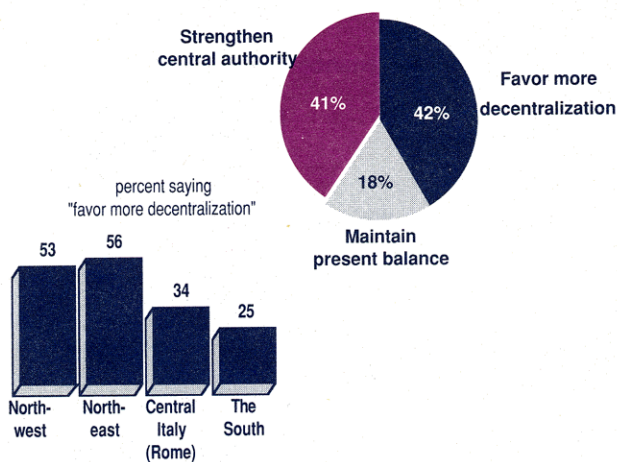
# Devolution—Italian Style

**Editor's Note:** Modern Italy had a tradition of centralized national government. But in 1970, the country began an experiment with decentralization—with 20 regions assuming semi-autonomous roles.

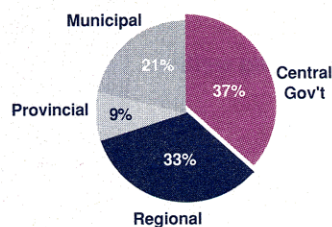
Robert D. Putnam, a leading student of Italian government, describes the country's experience with devolution in a 1993 book, *Making Democracy Work: Civil Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). He writes:

*Strong regional and local identities are part of history's bequest to Italy...Fearing the reactionary tendencies of the Church and the peasants, as well as the backwardness of the South, however, the majority of the makers of modern Italy (like most of their counterparts in the emerging states of today's Third World) insisted that decentralization was incompatible with prosperity and political progress. The centralizers quickly won the debate....[Against this backdrop] the Italian regional experiment inaugurated in 1970 remains, as Sidney Tarrow observed, 'one of the few recent attempts to create new representative institutions in the region-states of the West.'... The new division of authority between the center and the regions was still far from federal. Most regional funds came from the center, and the central authorities retained a veto over regional legislation. But the regions were more powerful than local governments had ever been in unified Italy. The legislative authority of the regions now encompassed such areas as health, housing, urban planning, agriculture, public works, and some aspects of education. [pp. 18, 17, 24]*

### Views on the Issue of Change in the Organization of Government Authority in Italy



### "In the future, which level of government should have more power?"



### Big Differences in Regional Responses

	Northwest	Northeast	Central Italy	The South
Central Gov't	24	22	39	50
Regional Gov't	45	46	26	19
Provincial Gov't	10	13	7	6
Municipal Gov't	18	19	26	20

### Evaluation of the Performance of One's Own Regional Gov't, By Section of the Country

	Northwest	Northeast	Central	South
Excellent/Good	35	54	27	10
So, so	37	29	42	33
Pretty bad/Terrible	27	17	32	58

Source: Survey by CENSIS (Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali), Italy, October 7-12, 1994.