



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS COMMUNITY CASE DISCUSSIONS: 2020 SURVEY RESULTS

December 2020
Prepared by LWV Greenwich

Background and Survey Summary

In 2017, the League of Women Voters of Greenwich (CT) began its collaboration with the Harvard Case Method Project, founded by Harvard Business School Professor David Moss. Professor Moss pioneered the use of the case study method to teach his undergraduate and graduate students about pivotal episodes in American democracy. Given the popularity and impact of his course at Harvard, Professor Moss launched an effort to bring case method teaching to high schools. The objective was to provide a more exciting, relevant and effective learning experience for students and to help reverse the broad decline in civics education in the United States. High school teachers from around the country have trained under Professor Moss in the case method pedagogy since 2015, and they are actively using the cases in their US history, government and civics classes. The project has been immensely successful, having expanded its footprint to high schools in 46 states in just a few years. And, extensive data collected from teacher interviews as well as student surveys suggests that the case method has strong positive impacts on high school students' critical thinking and evidenced-based argumentation and fosters significant growth in their civic knowledge, civic engagement, and their commitment to democracy.

League chapters looking to get involved with this project have two main goals: first, to identify outstanding high school teachers in their communities who will train with Professor Moss and bring case method teaching back to their classrooms; and, second, to partner with those teachers to run community case discussions. These community events are essentially intergenerational conversations where students and adults of all ages come together, having read a case in advance, to discuss a key decision point in American history. Those who participate find their commitment to the democratic process strengthened. They are reminded of the power of their voice as citizens, and they experience the importance of reasoned discourse and constructive debate to our nation's progress.

Since 2019, League chapters have nominated nearly 100 teachers from 28 states to join the project, and this number is expected to grow dramatically over the coming years. Participation has been broad-based as well. Teachers come from suburban (53%), rural (34%) and urban (13%) high schools. And, while the project is open to public district, public charter and private school educators, the vast majority (95%) of League-nominated teachers have come from public school districts, with Title I schools representing 28% of the total.

In 2020, League chapters from across the country began to run their own community case discussions, following the model developed by the Greenwich League. (The Greenwich League has held four highly-rated community events since 2017.) The survey report which follows was compiled with data collected from all League chapters that hosted community case discussions during 2020. A total of 11 League chapters held 13 community case discussions, with 5 events held in person and 8 conducted via Zoom. (See Appendix 1 for more detail.)

Consolidated survey results for 2020 show that participants:

- enjoyed taking part in community case discussions (87%);
- were not daunted by the pre-reading requirement (83% average favorable rating across 5 measures);
- learned something new (88%); and,
- strongly recommended that the case method be adopted by other teachers, schools and civic groups (92%).

Also, the impact on civic attitudes and behaviors continues to be markedly positive, with attendees reporting a much greater likelihood of engaging in constructive debate with those having an opposing political view (53%). And, even though participants were largely predisposed to being politically involved given their League affiliation, 21% said they would be *much more likely* to vote.

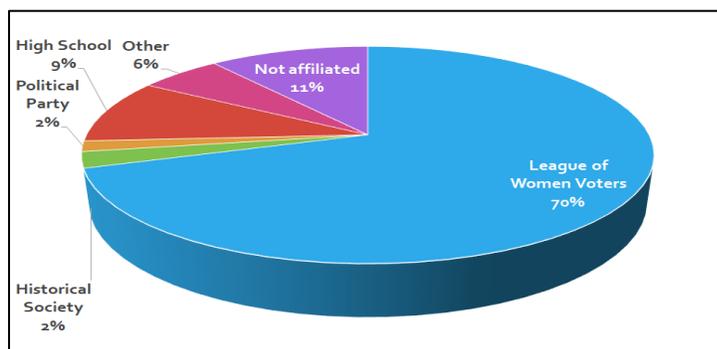
The majority of community case discussions in 2020 took place via Zoom to keep attendees safe in the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges of converting from in-person to remote case events, high school teachers moderating the discussions were very highly rated (92%). This result speaks to the skill and energy of the teachers who succeeded in keeping audience members engaged even when conducting these events virtually. Surprisingly, the “venues” received high ratings too (82%). It was encouraging to see that the success of these community events was not negatively impacted by the prevalence of remote attendance in 2020, especially since virtual events are likely to continue into 2021.

Greenwich Community Event and 2020 Survey Results

The survey results this year were influenced by one event in particular: the Greenwich (CT) League hosted a large national community event via Zoom on November 10, 2020, with 67 League members from chapters in 26 different states participating. Around two dozen high school teachers from around the country attended too.

The Greenwich event had 200 participants in total and a survey response rate of 54%. Other League chapters hosting events in 2020 had a response rate of approximately 39%, based on their estimated attendance levels. The Greenwich League’s community case discussion accounted for 45% of the total responses to this survey in 2020, so it is important to note that the results in this consolidated summary report are weighted toward that event.

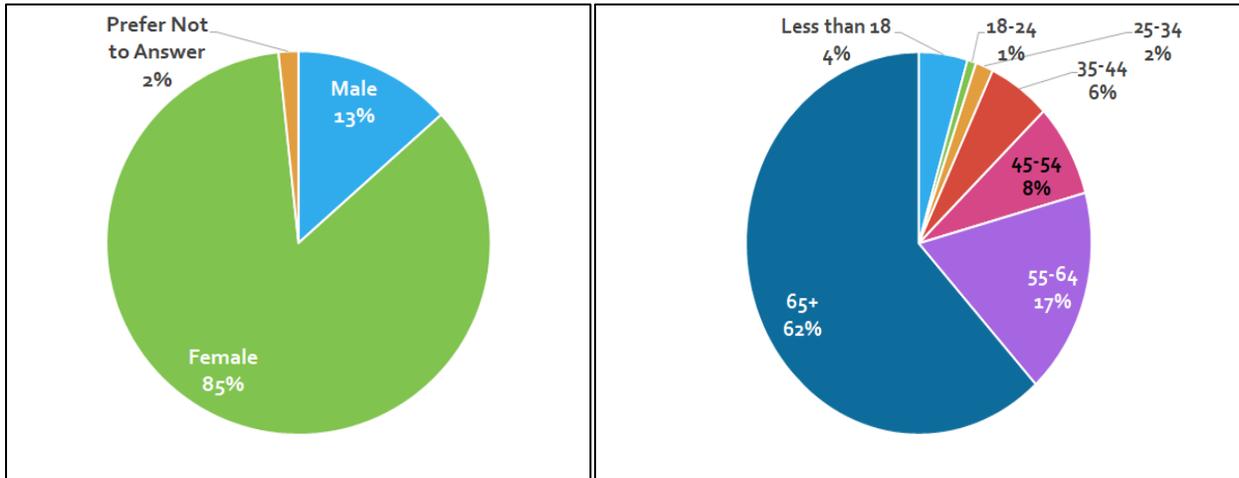
Profile of the Participants – Primary Affiliation



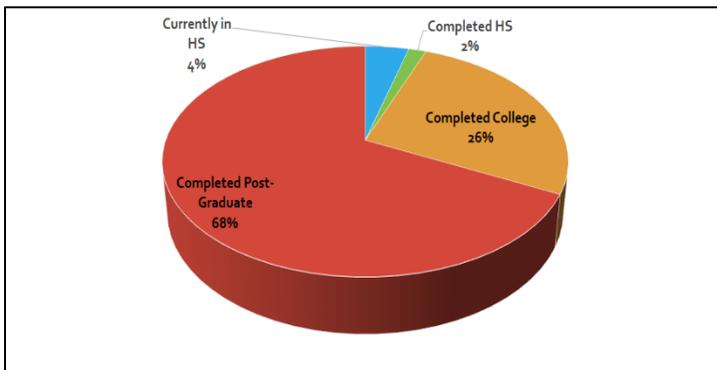
Participants were principally affiliated with their local League of Women Voters chapter (70%) and around 9% were affiliated with their local high school. Given the project’s focus on intergenerational conversations, efforts will be made to increase student participation in 2021.

85% of participants were female and nearly 80% were age 55 or older. Again, attempts to create greater gender and age diversity will be a key objective in 2021. Greenwich community case discussions in 2017, 2018 and 2019 included a much larger percentage of “under 25s” at 40%, 46% and 29% respectively.

Gender and Age Range



Educational Attainment

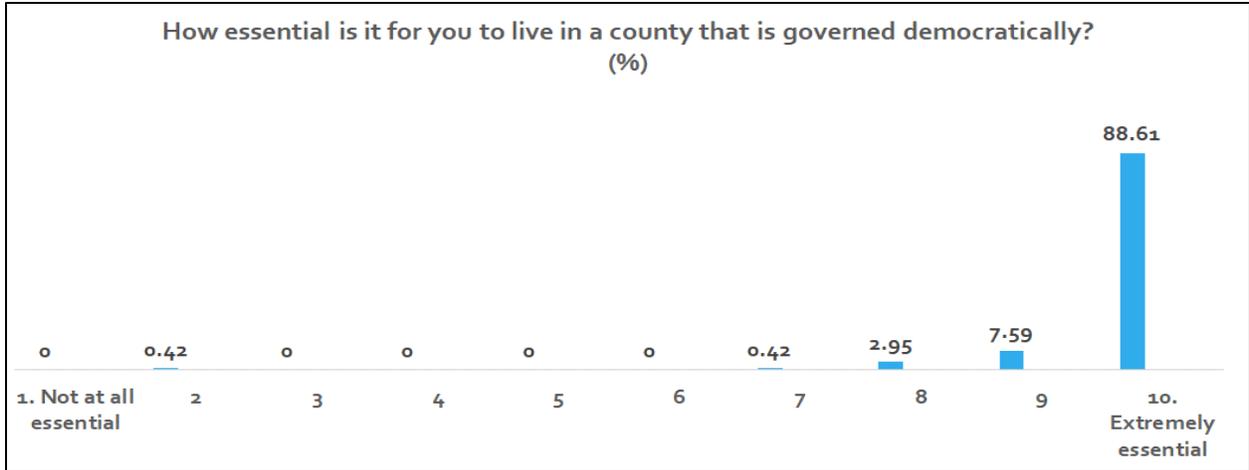


68% of participants said that their highest level of educational attainment was a post-graduate or professional degree. Since the most recent Census figures show that 13.1% of US adults have an advanced degree, the educational level of survey respondents more closely reflects their League affiliation than national averages. League chapters will be encouraged to create audiences with greater diversity in

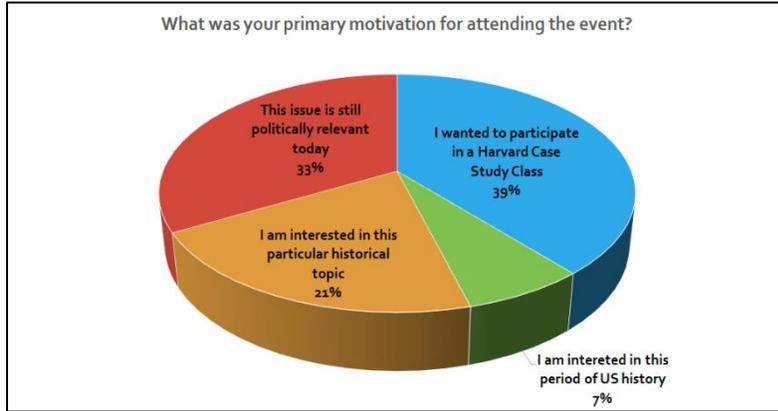
educational attainment as they host their community case discussions in 2021 and beyond.

Importance of Living in a Democracy

Each year since 2018, this survey has included the question: How essential is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? In 2020, 89% answered that it was “extremely essential” to live in a democracy, a figure which is well above average for any age group. Over the past few years, scholars have expressed concern about the health of democracy globally with mounting evidence of “democratic backsliding.” Not surprisingly, an audience comprised largely of LWV-affiliated participants expressed strong support for democratic governance. Results for Greenwich in previous years (2018 and 2019) were similarly high at 81% and 90% respectively.



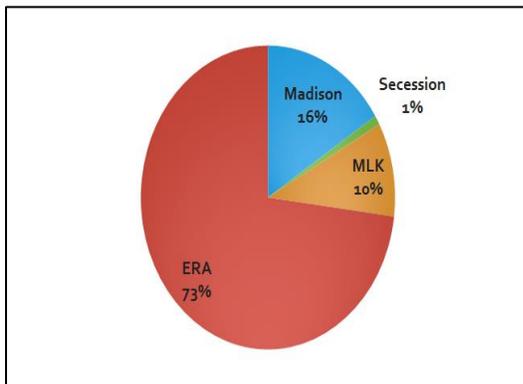
Reasons for Attending



Participants said that their main reasons for attending the event were a desire to participate in a Harvard-style case study class (39%) and because the topic was still politically relevant today (33%). The vast majority (75%) said they heard about the event from their local LWV chapter. The factors driving attendance in 2020 were similar to those cited by participants in 2018

and 2019: primarily to experience a case method class and secondarily because the topic had modern political relevance.

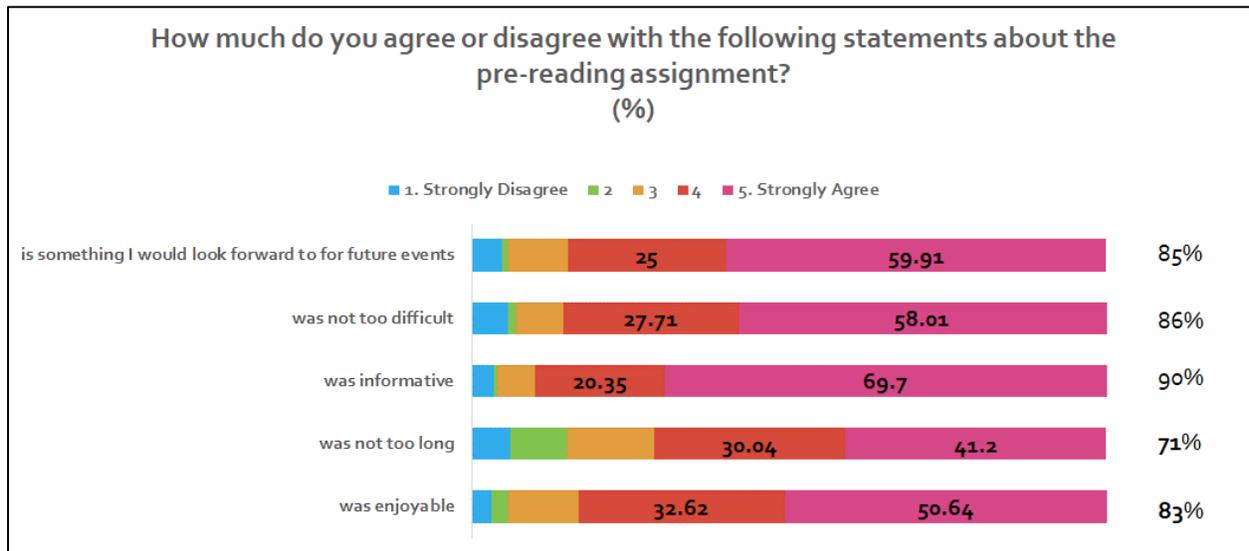
Case and Pre-Reading Assessment



73% said that the ERA case was chosen for their event, reflecting the overall interest in that case during the League’s centenary year, as well as the weighting of the Greenwich community event in the responses (where this case was also selected). As of 2020, the Greenwich League has conducted community events using all four cases that League chapters have been permitted to access by Harvard Business School Publishing. Other Leagues have also expressed interest in continuing these community events as part of their regular program schedule each year.

The pre-reading assignment had an 83% average favorable rating across five measures. Participants found the case reading enjoyable, informative, appropriately challenging and something they would look forward to doing again for future community events. (Note that the top two box scores are added together for the “favorable” result when using a scale of 1 to 5 throughout this survey.)

Pre-reading assessments were also favorable in 2017, 2018 and 2019, with positive ratings averaging 86% over the three-year period. There were concerns about whether adult participants would read and prepare the cases with the same level of enthusiasm as students, but survey results indicate that adults came to the events ready to engage and that they enjoyed the opportunity to “go back to school” for an evening.

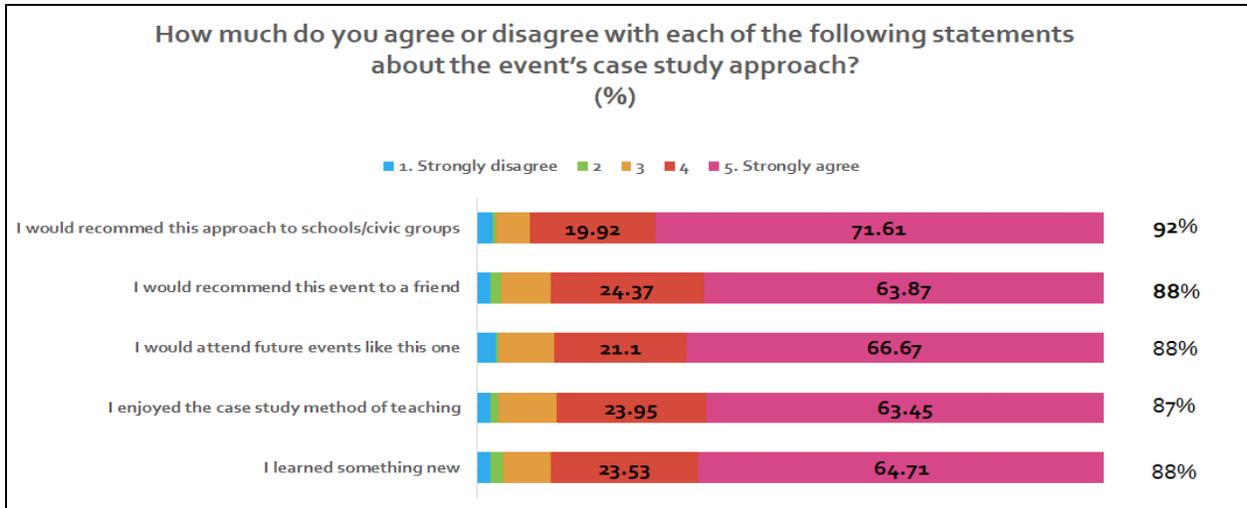


Event Evaluation

Overall, participants thoroughly enjoyed the event and felt strongly that the case method was a valuable teaching pedagogy that should be used in other schools and communities.

92% said they would recommend that other teachers, schools and civic groups adopt the case method of teaching; 87% said they personally enjoyed the case method of teaching; and, 88% said they would attend future community case discussions.

In 2017, 2018 and 2019, 94% of participants on average said they would recommend the case method be adopted more broadly; 93% said they personally enjoyed the case method of teaching; and, 91% said they would attend future community case discussions.



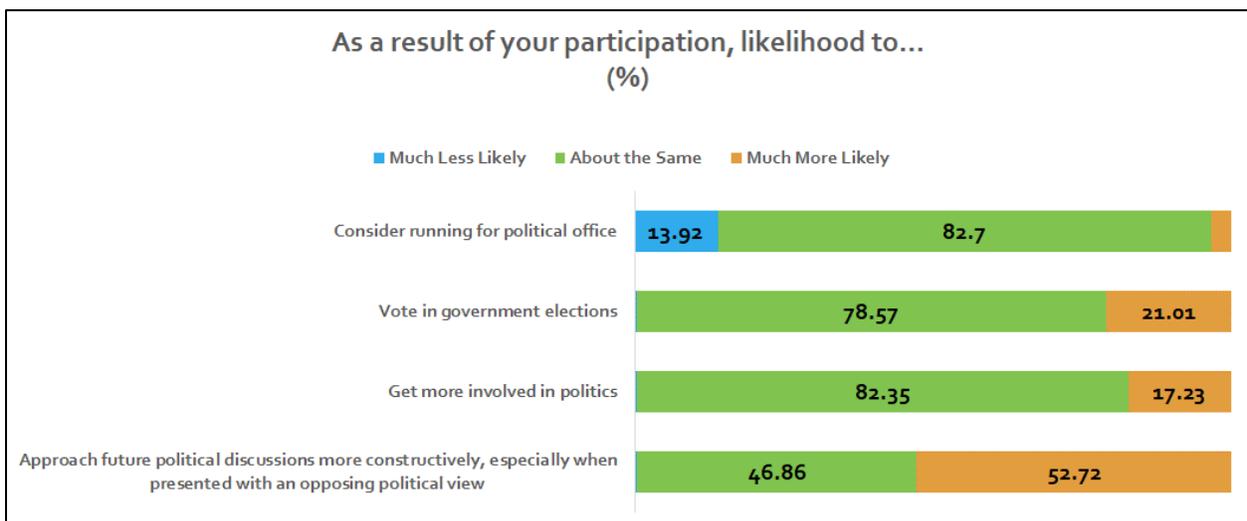
Impact on Civic Attitudes and Behavior

The most striking result in our survey continues to be the impact that participation in community case discussions has on civic attitudes and behaviors. In 2020, those who attended the event reported a strengthening of their commitment to democracy as follows:

- 53% of participants said they would be *much more likely* to approach future political discussions more constructively, especially when presented with an opposing political view;
- 21% would be *much more likely* to vote; and,
- 17% would be *much more likely* to get more involved in politics.

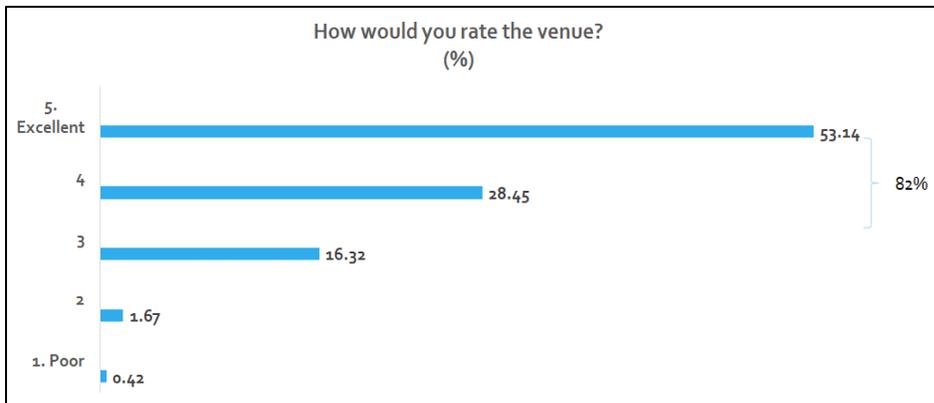
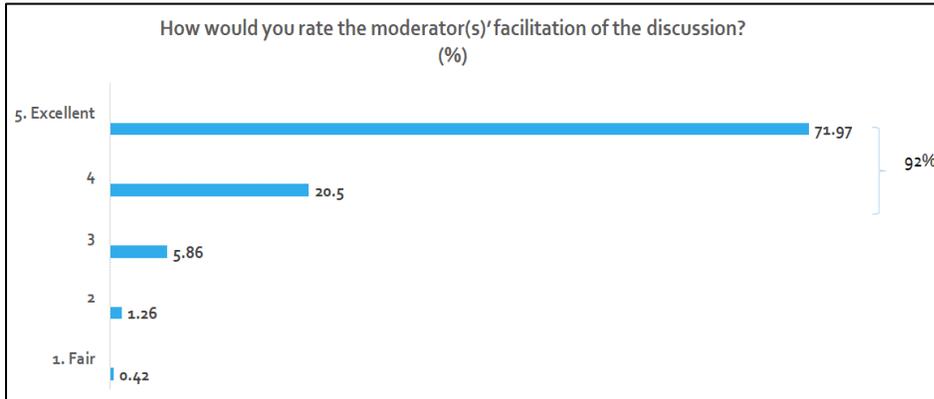
On average, in 2017, 2018 and 2019, impacts on civic behavior were reported as follows:

- 65% of participants said they would be *much more likely* to approach future political discussions more constructively, especially when presented with an opposing political view;
- 37% would be *much more likely* to vote; and,
- 35% would be *much more likely* to get more involved in politics.



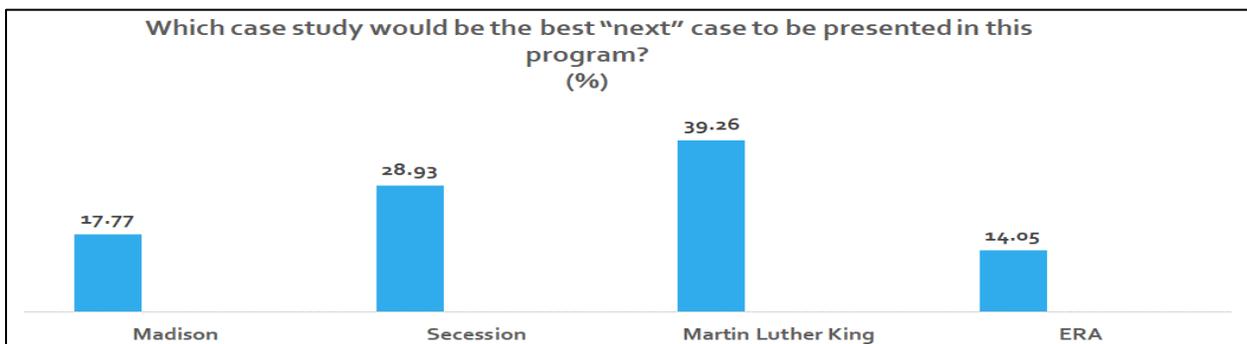
Assessment of Case Moderation and Venue

High school teachers acting as case moderators were very highly rated (92%), and even though most events took place over Zoom, venues were also highly rated (82%). (Again, the top two box scores were added to arrive at the results, since these questions were also scored on a scale of 1 to 5.) The community case discussions have afforded talented high school teachers the opportunity to share their case method teaching skills with a wider audience and enjoy public recognition for their efforts.



Vote for Next Case Reading

The Martin Luther King case received the most support for the next community case event (39%) followed by the Secession case (29%).



APPENDIX I

Since November 2019, 11 League chapters have held 13 community case discussions. (The Radnor, PA and Greenwich, CT Leagues each hosted two.) Five events were held in person and 8 were conducted via Zoom as follows:

- Cy-Fair TX (11/7/2019; in person). This event predated the creation of the online survey.
- Radnor, PA (two events: 1/12/2020 in person, and 4/26/2020 via Zoom)
- Helena, MT (3/3/2020; in person)
- Orange County, FL (3/4/2020; in person)
- Warren County, PA (7/26/2020; Zoom)
- Washington County, OR (8/20/2020; Zoom)
- Dane County, WI (8/25/2020; Zoom)
- Marion/Polk, OR (10/3/2020; Zoom)
- Beloit, WI (10/31/2020; Zoom)
- Seminole, FL (11/9/2020; Zoom)
- Greenwich, CT (two events: 11/12/2019 in person, and 11/10/2020 via Zoom). The 11/12/2019 event predated the creation of the online survey.

APPENDIX II

- The Greenwich League’s event on November 10, 2020 via Zoom was opened to all Leagues and teachers engaged with the case method civics project since 2018.
- Leagues from 26 states participated in the November 10th Greenwich event, and survey responses were received from participants in 24 of those states.
- There were 360 registrations for the Greenwich event, nearly 200 participants on the night of the event, and 108 survey responses from that event alone (a 54% response rate).
- Other League chapters running community events in 2020 had approximately 343 participants with 134 survey responses (a 39% response rate).
- There were 242 total responses recorded during all of 2020 for this survey, and 108 were from the Greenwich, CT event (or 45% of the total).

APPENDIX III

Greenwich Community Event on November 10, 2020 Elicits National Survey Response
League Chapters in the Following States Attended the Event and Submitted a Survey Response

Colorado	Massachusetts	Oregon
Connecticut	Maryland	Pennsylvania
DC (Washington)	Montana	Tennessee
Florida	North Carolina	Texas
Iowa	New Jersey	Virginia
Illinois	New Mexico	Washington
Kansas	New York	Wisconsin
Louisiana	Ohio	Wyoming

Contact Dr. Deirdre Kamlani if you would like to get involved with this project at civics@lwvgreenwich.org.