



A NEW WAY TO TEACH CIVICS USING THE HARVARD CASE STUDY METHOD

On November 13, 2017, Professor David Moss of Harvard Business School moderated a case study program sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Greenwich in partnership with Greenwich High School. This program piloted a new approach to teaching civics and aimed to inform our State and National League leadership about the viability of scaling this approach nationwide. Participants in the pilot were asked to read and prepare the first case from Professor Moss's book, *Democracy: A Case Study*, titled "James Madison, the 'Federal Negative,' and the Making of the US Constitution," which was provided free of charge. At the heart of the case was the debate about how much power (and what kind of power) the federal government should have over states.

Professor Moss pioneered the use of the Harvard case study method to teach US history, democracy and civics, and his book contains 19 cases centered on pivotal episodes in American democracy, from the Constitutional Convention in 1787 to the Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision in 2010. His course was one of the most popular at Harvard, and the Greenwich League's pilot program with Professor Moss was one of our most successful to date. Since then, the Greenwich League has held two additional community case discussions facilitated by Greenwich High School teachers trained in the case method. For all three events, the discussions and debates were lively and engaging. Students and adults participated in equal numbers, and the programs helped to advance several League goals at the same time: increasing student membership, creating a more dynamic partnership with our high schools, promoting cross-party dialogue and enhancing the quality of civics education. The ultimate goal is to encourage people to recommit to our democracy by overcoming partisan divisions through constructive debate.

A robust survey was conducted after each program, and the survey analytics have exceeded all of our expectations. For the November 2019 event, 94% of attendees expressed a strong desire to discuss other cases, and 90% recommended that the case study approach be used by other schools and civic groups. We also found that taking part in the event had a discernible and positive impact on people's civic behavior: 58% of participants said they would be much more likely to approach future political discussions more constructively, especially when presented with an opposing point of view; 35% said they would be much more likely to vote; and 21% said they would be much more likely to get involved in politics.

Given the strong results of the initial event, leaders at the National League supported our efforts to scale the program with League chapters around the US. Working with Professor Moss and Harvard Business Publishing, we have negotiated free access for participating Leagues to the following cases: James Madison, the "Federal Negative," and the Making of the US Constitution (1787); A Nation Divided: The United States and the Challenge of Secession (1861); Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Black Voting Rights (1965); and Democracy and Women's Rights in America: The Fight Over the ERA (1982).

We hope you will consider sponsoring a case study program in your community. Training for high school teachers in the case study method is available and provided entirely free of charge and the next workshop will be held in August 2020. High school Social Studies Departments, as well as "We the People" and "Model UN" groups, are good places to start. Please contact Dr. Deirdre Kamlani, Board and Program Committee Member at the Greenwich League, for more information: deirdre.kamlani@gmail.com.

The Case Method Project at Harvard Business School – Executive Summary

The High School Case Method Project at Harvard Business School is an initiative formed to achieve two goals: (1) strengthen secondary education by bringing the case method into high school classrooms and (2) deepen students' understanding of, and engagement with, American democracy. Based on the remarkable success of case-based teaching in professional education, and the evidence of its success in high school classrooms that we have collected to date, we believe the case method can significantly improve secondary education, ensuring a more exciting, relevant, and effective experience for students and teachers across a range of subjects. Our experience also demonstrates that the case method is especially effective at engaging students with topics in history and democracy and that it presents a unique opportunity to help reverse the broad decline in civic awareness and engagement in the United States.

Launched as a pilot program in 2015, the Case Method Project (CMP) offers high school teachers a fully case-based curriculum on the *History of American Democracy*, originally developed by Professor David Moss for Harvard undergraduates and MBA students. The curriculum can be employed as a full-year standalone high school course. Alternatively – and more commonly – select cases from the curriculum can be integrated into existing U.S. history, government, and civics courses. Each case study tells the story of a key episode in the history of American democracy, leading up to a critical decision facing a political leader or reformer, but not revealing what decision was ultimately made. Guided by teacher questioning and in-class discussion, students are asked to put themselves in the shoes of important historical decision-makers and to think critically, formulate their own positions, and defend these positions with evidence. Besides the cases themselves, CMP provides high school teachers with unparalleled professional development in case-method teaching, a full library of supporting teaching materials, and ongoing mentoring and support – all entirely free of charge.

Our internal assessment reports, based on extensive data and feedback from teachers and students alike, show significant improvements stemming from use of the cases, not only in students' academic skills but also in their civic interest and engagement. At the same time, teachers report finding case-method teaching highly rewarding on a personal level and a significant contributor to increased job satisfaction and professional growth. As numerous teachers have put it, the case method is a “game changer.”

As part of our initial pilot, CMP is now partnering with more than 300 teachers at over 200 high schools in 43 states and the District of Columbia, and our cases have reached nearly 30,000 high school students so far. With a growing library of cases, a new online training program to complement our on-campus workshops, and an expanding network of community partnerships nationwide, the Case Method Project is now working to scale its operations, with plans to reach thousands of teachers and many hundreds of thousands of students and community-members over the coming years.

Detailed Findings

The following are some of the key findings from CMP's ongoing work testing the *History of American Democracy* cases and the case method in high schools across the country:

Impact on teachers:

- CMP partner-teachers interviewed in 2019 reported highly positive impacts from the case method on their overall job satisfaction (8.3 out of 10), comfort with the course material (7.9), excitement for next year (8.9), and professional growth (8.8).

- On a 10-point scale, with 10 being the “*most enjoyable thing you’ve done as a teacher,*” the case method averaged a 9.
- Over 90% of teachers at the CMP’s on-campus workshops said they were “extremely likely” to recommend the program to their colleagues.
- CMP’s system of ongoing, targeted teaching support consistently helps teachers to deliver a learning experience that their students find more effective.

Impact on students’ academic performance:

- Teachers reported highly positive impacts for their students across a broad range of indicators, including the essential skills of critical thinking (8.4 out of 10) and evidence-based argumentation (8.0).
- Teachers also cited positive impacts on their students’ historical thinking, depth of historical understanding, writing skills, retention of information, and motivation.
- Several experiments conducted by individual teachers showed that students who used CMP cases in their classrooms performed markedly better than comparison groups on exams, especially writing-intensive ones.
- Students surveyed in 2018-2019 reported positive impacts across a range of metrics, including on their historical thinking skills (3.87 out of 5, where 3 is neutral relative to other methods) and their confidence (3.81). Notably, students who used more cases reported stronger impacts from, and stronger preferences for, the case method.

Impact on students’ civic knowledge and engagement:

- Relative to a comparison group, students using cases reported more than twice as much growth in (1) their understanding of major political issues in the US, (2) their ability to make evidence-based arguments, and (3) their comfort with sharing their viewpoints in front of peers.
- Students who used cases in class were more likely to express a personal interest in running for office at the end of the course than at the start of the course; students who did not use CMP cases experienced no growth on this dimension.
- Students who completed a course using CMP cases in at least some class sessions grew 11.4% more likely to rate democracy as “absolutely important” than they had at the start of the course; their growth was more than double that of students in similar courses who did not use the case method.
- Students reported a stronger positive impact on their ability to look at issues from others’ points of view (3.85/5) as a result of using cases, and the rating steadily increased as they used more cases.

Plans for the Future

To take the project to scale, during 2020 we will shift most of our operations from Harvard Business School to an independent non-profit, the Case Method Institute for Education and Democracy. The Institute will maintain close informal ties with HBS while marshalling the unique power of the case method to help dramatically more Americans, young and old, strengthen their understanding of our democracy, its history, and their essential role in it.



together with

GREENWICH **H**IGH **S**CHOOL
SOcial **S**TUDIES **D**EPARTMENT
AND
GREENWICH **H**ISTORICAL **S**OCIETY

Harvard Case Discussion

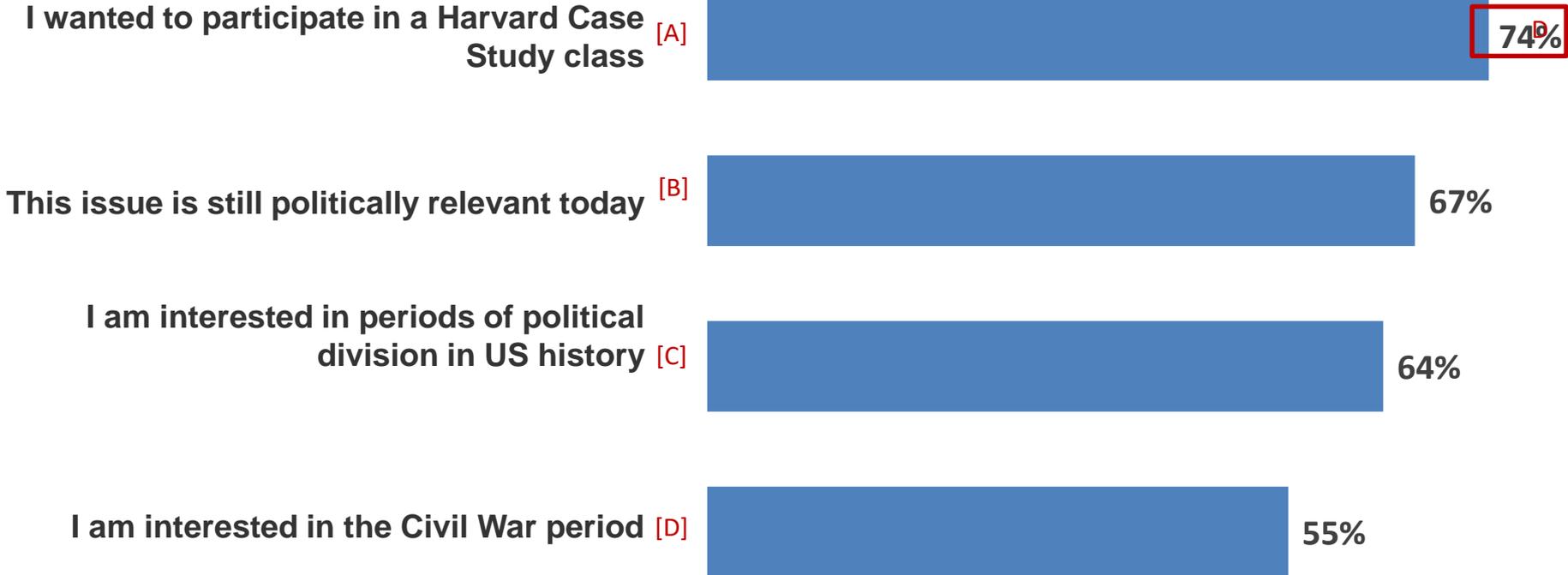
A Nation Divided:

The United States and the Challenge of Secession

Event Report: December 1, 2019

Motivation to Attend

- Attendees were motivated mostly by a desire to participate in a Harvard case study class



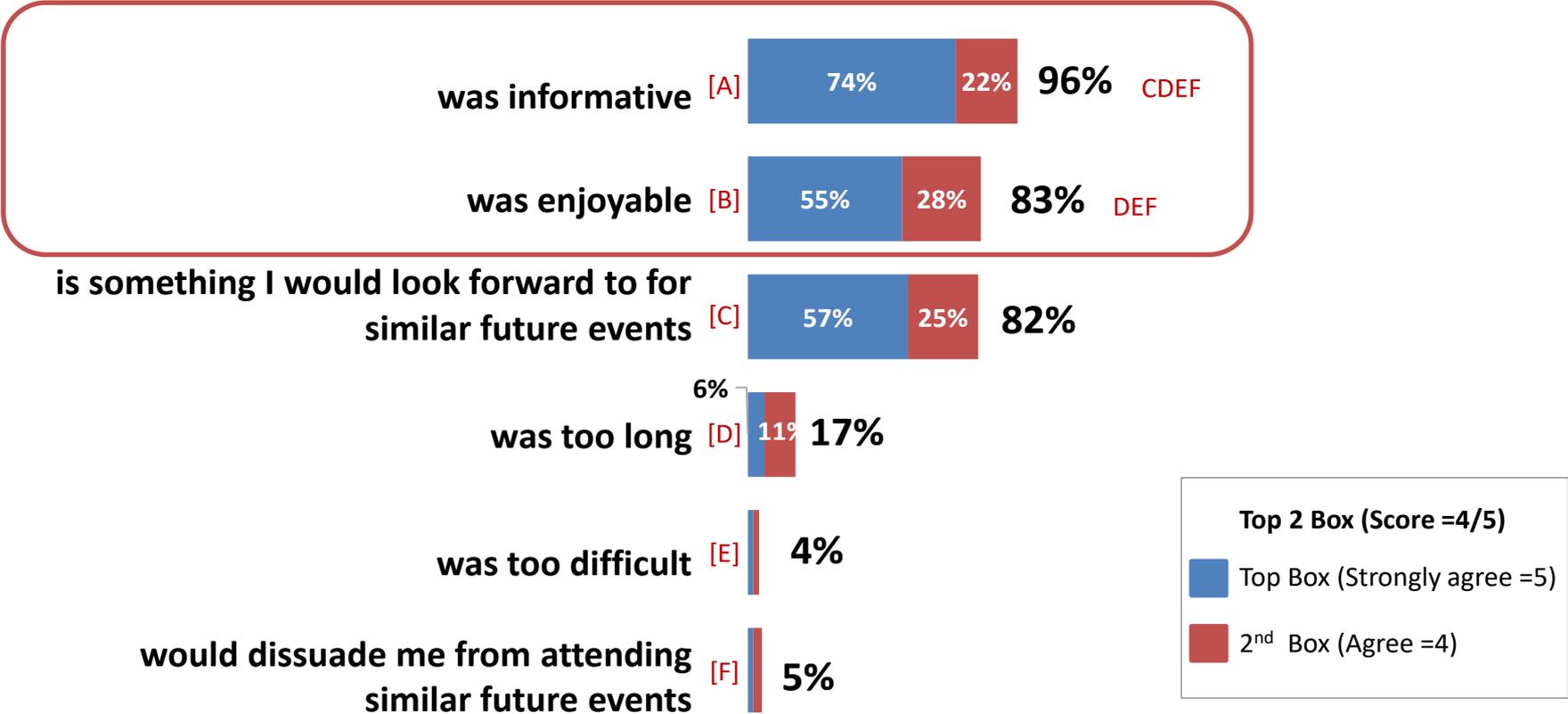
Q3. What motivated you to attend this event? Please select all that apply.

Base size n= 69

Letters indicate a significant higher difference at the 90% confidence level, but with the small base size, results should be considered indicative rather than absolute

Evaluation of The Pre-Reading Assignment

► Participants found the pre-reading assignment **informative** and **enjoyable**



Q4. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the pre-reading assignment? The pre-reading assignment...
Please select one response for each and do not leave any row blank. Strongly disagree to Strongly agree.

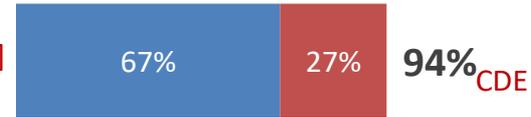
Base size n=65

Letters indicate a significant higher difference at the 90% confidence level, but with the small base size, results should be considered indicative rather than absolute

Evaluation of The Case Study

- ▶ Participants regarded the case study method very positively, and would **recommend** the approach be used by other teaching groups

I would attend future events like this one, which are focused on different issues in US politics and history [A]



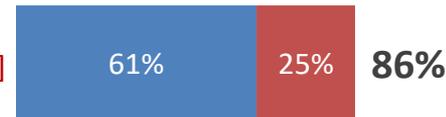
I enjoyed the case study method of teaching [B]



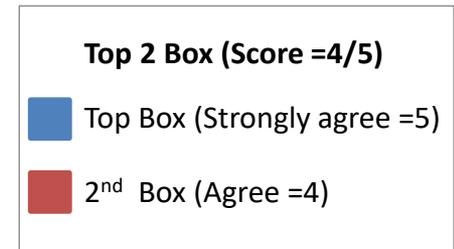
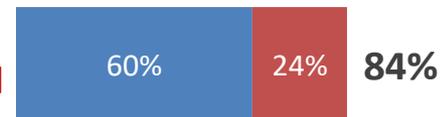
I would recommend that this approach be used by other teachers, schools and civic groups [C]



I learned something new [D]



I would recommend this event to a friend [E]



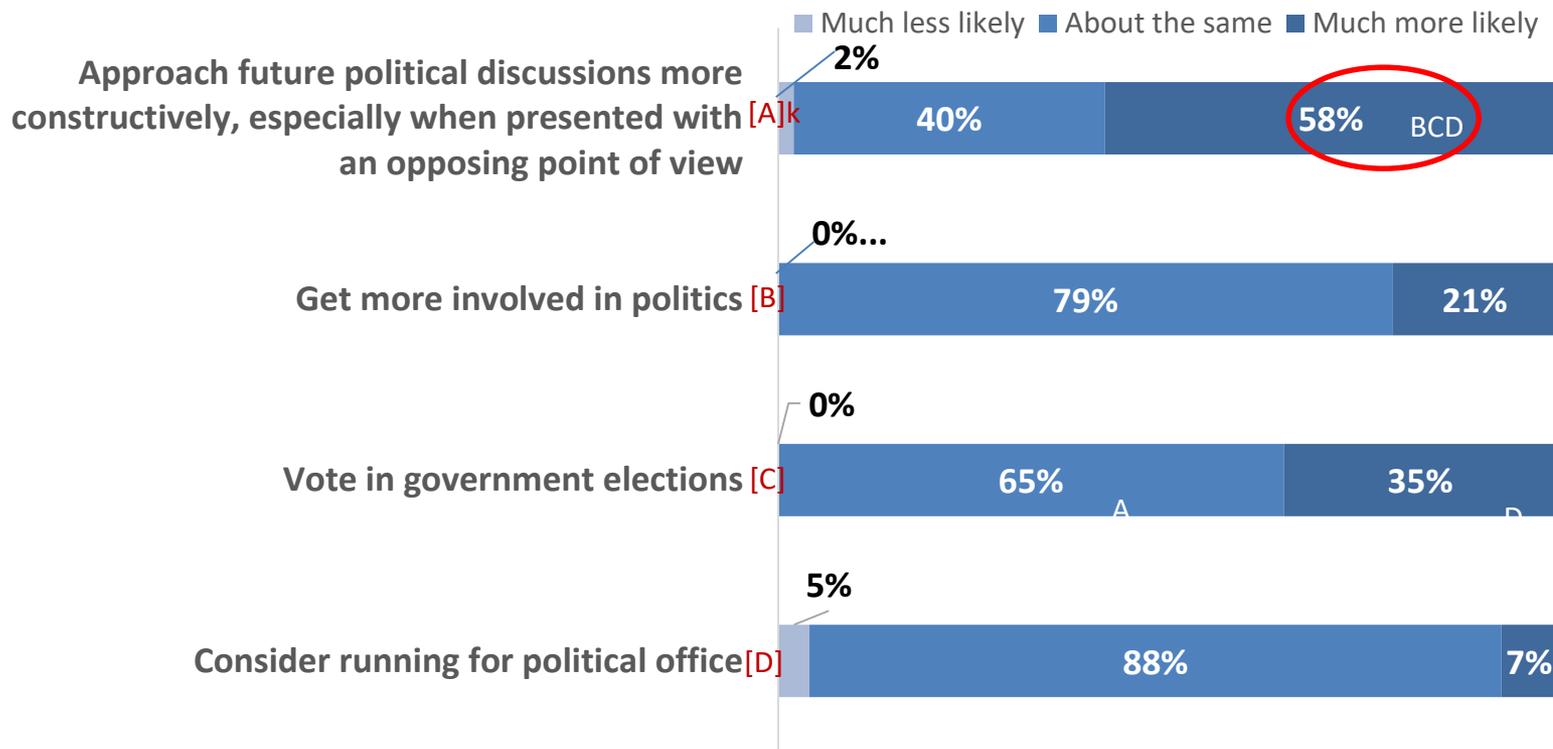
Q5. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about tonight's case study? Please select one response for each and do not leave any row blank. Strongly disagree to Strongly agree.

Base size n= 67

Letters indicate a significant higher difference at the 90% confidence level, but with the small base size, results should be considered indicative rather than absolute

As a Result of Participation, Likelihood to...

- ▶ Almost 60% of the participants said they would be much more likely to approach future political discussions more constructively, especially when presented with an opposing point of view
 - 35% would be much more likely to vote, and
 - 21% would be much more likely to get involved in politics



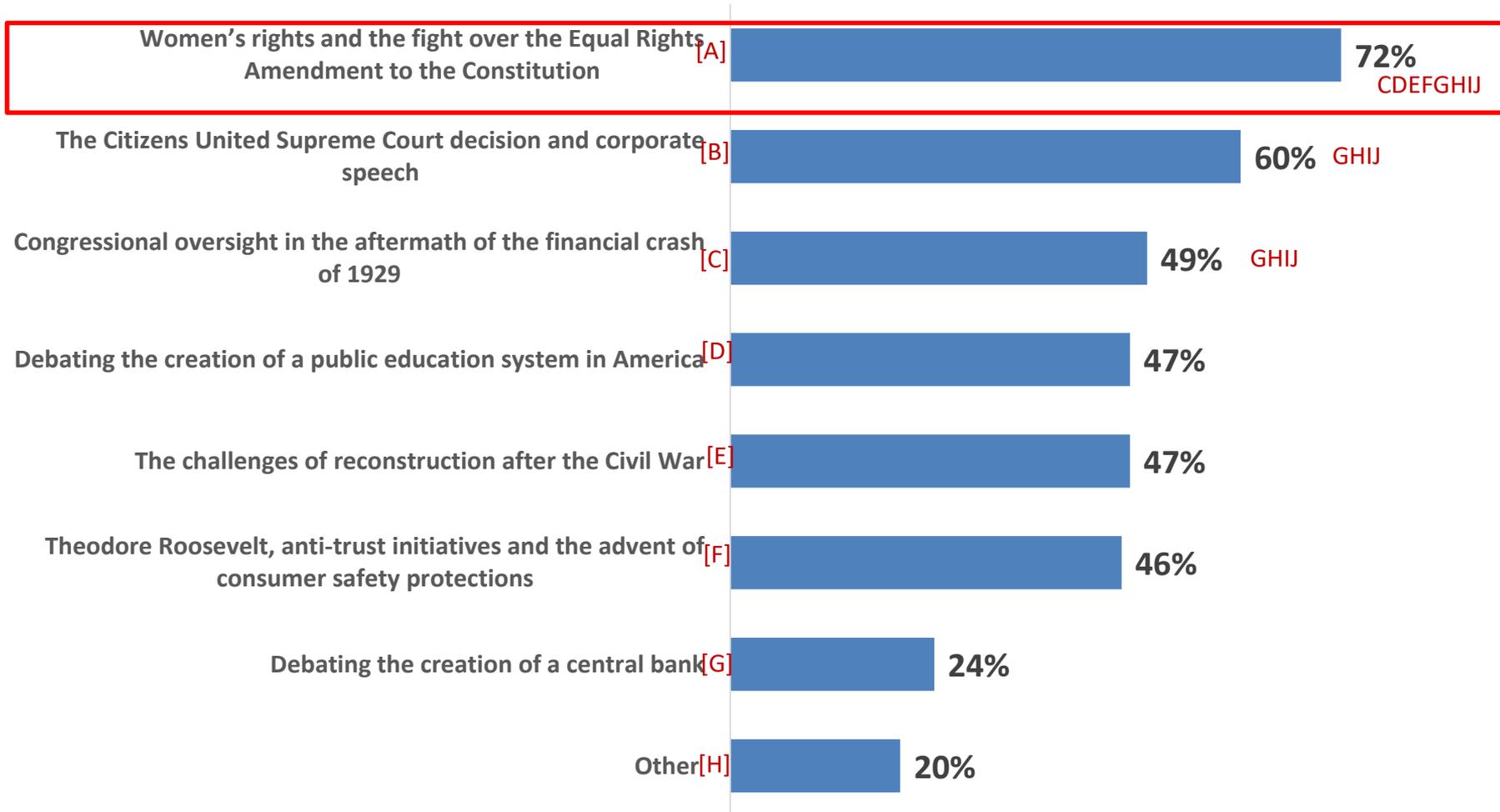
Q6. Based on your attendance at this event, rate your likelihood of doing the following: *Please select one response for each and do not leave any row blank.*

Base size n= 68

Letters indicate a significant higher difference at the 90% confidence level, but with the small base size, results should be considered indicative rather than absolute

Topics of Interest for Future Case Discussion Programs

- There was the most interest in the case about women’s political rights and the ERA for our next community case discussion



Q10. What other issue(s) would you like to see discussed in future case study programs? Please check all that apply.

Base size n= 68

Letters indicate a significant higher difference at the 90% confidence level, but with the small base size, results should be considered indicative rather than absolute