

College Debates and Discourse Alliance

SPRING 2026 IMPACT REPORT



ACTA



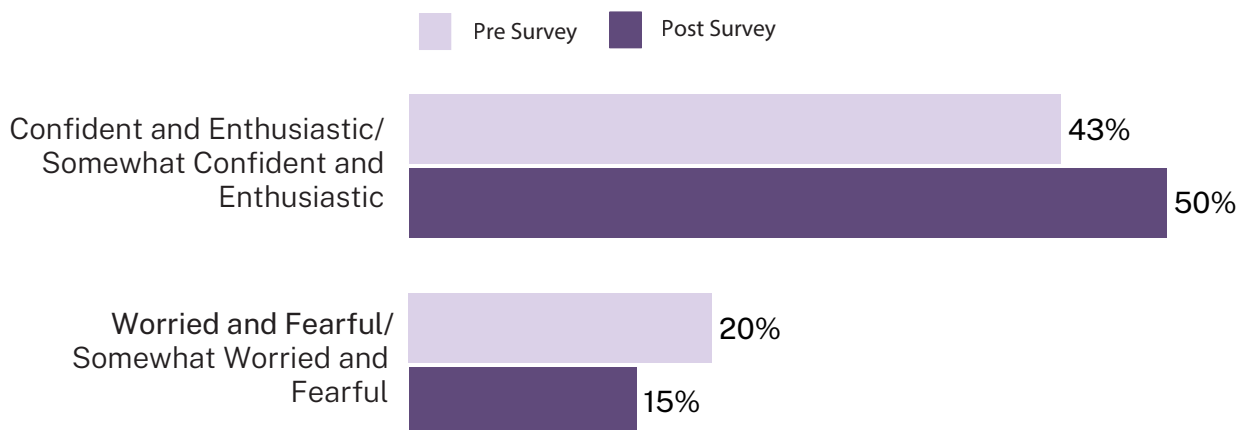
DEMOCRATIC
EROSION
CONSORTIUM

In Spring 2026, the College Debates and Discourse Alliance (CD&D), an initiative of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), continued its partnership with the Democratic Erosion Consortium (DEC), a nonpartisan research, teaching, and policy collaboration dedicated to addressing the threat of democratic erosion in the U.S. and around the world. For the second consecutive semester, CD&D and DEC administered shared pre- and post-event surveys to measure the impact of CD&D debate and dialogue programming in classrooms and on campuses across the US.

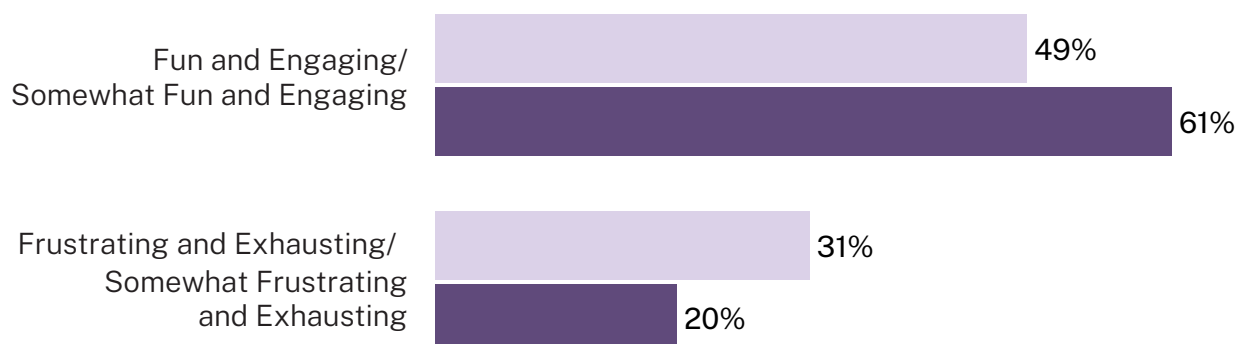
The following Spring 2026 data is based on surveys from events at 39 unique institutions, with a sample of 1,714 student participants who completed the pre-event assessment and 1,036 participants who completed the post-event assessment.

Following participation in a CD&D debate or dialogue event, student survey data shows...

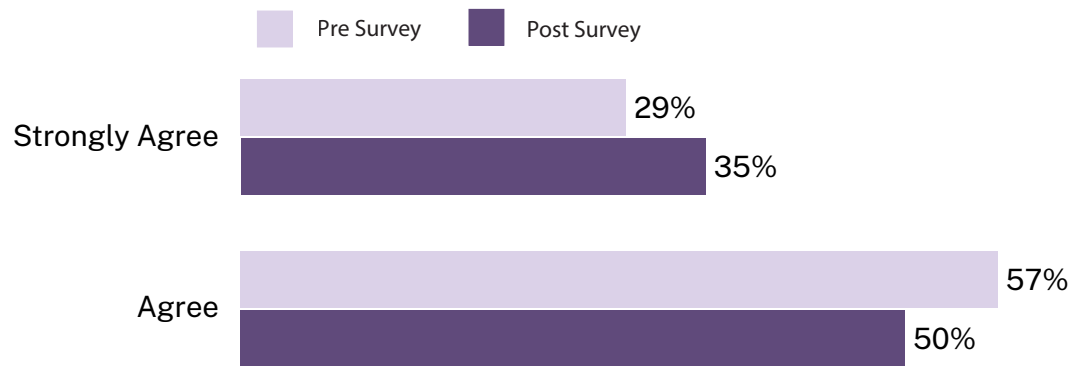
An **increase of 7 percentage points in confidence and enthusiasm about sharing ideas and opinions in class**; and a decrease of 5 percentage points in feeling worried and fearful about sharing ideas and opinions in class.



An **increase of 12 percentage points in finding it fun and engaging to discuss political issues with people who have different beliefs**; and a decrease of 11 percentage points in finding those discussions frustrating and exhausting.



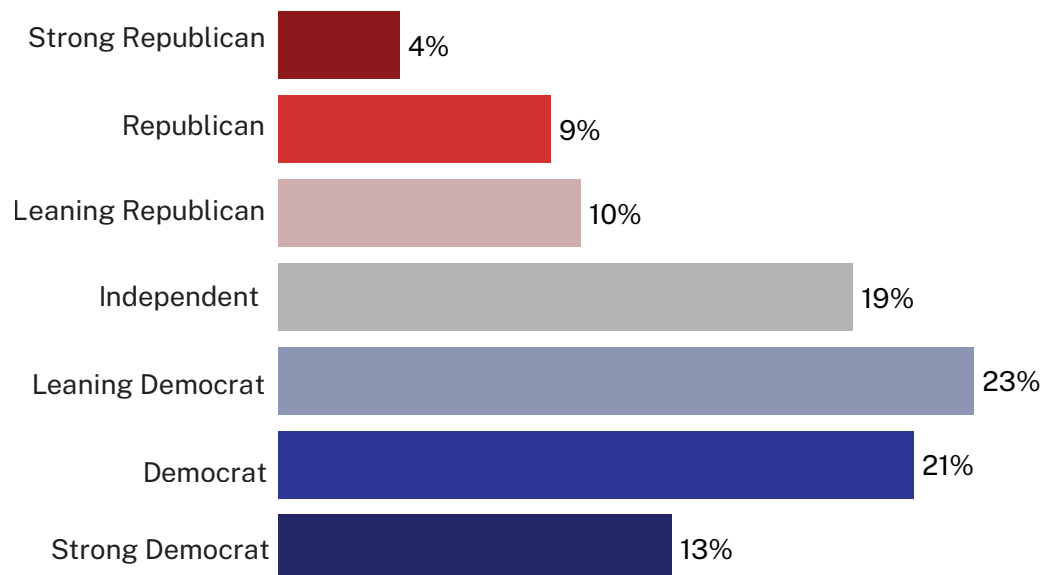
An increase of 6 percentage points in strongly agreeing with the ability to empathize and understand where others are coming from, even when not agreeing with their viewpoint.



Among program participants, 80 percent said they would recommend this experience to someone they know.

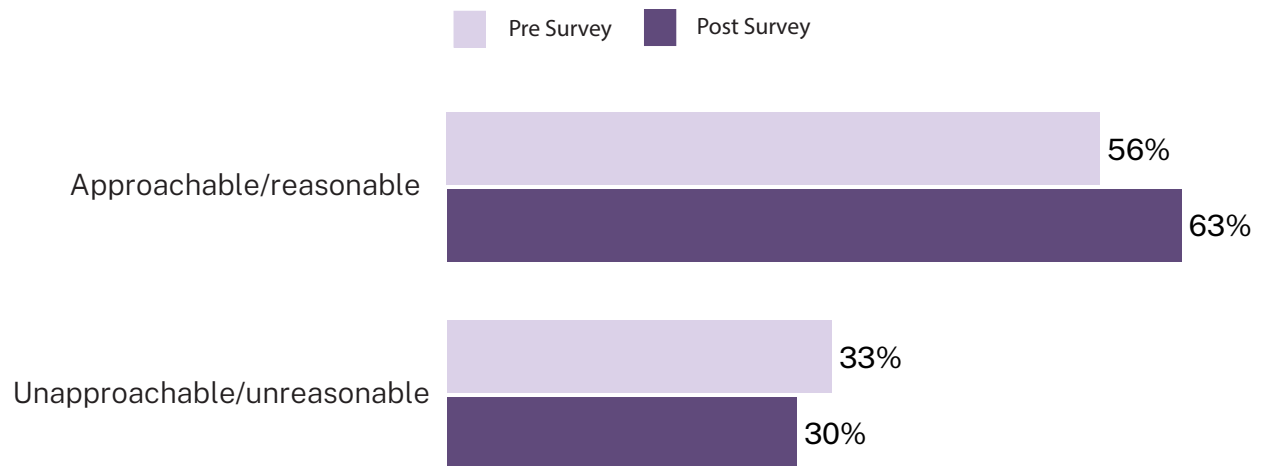


The following graph illustrates political affiliation of surveyed participants.

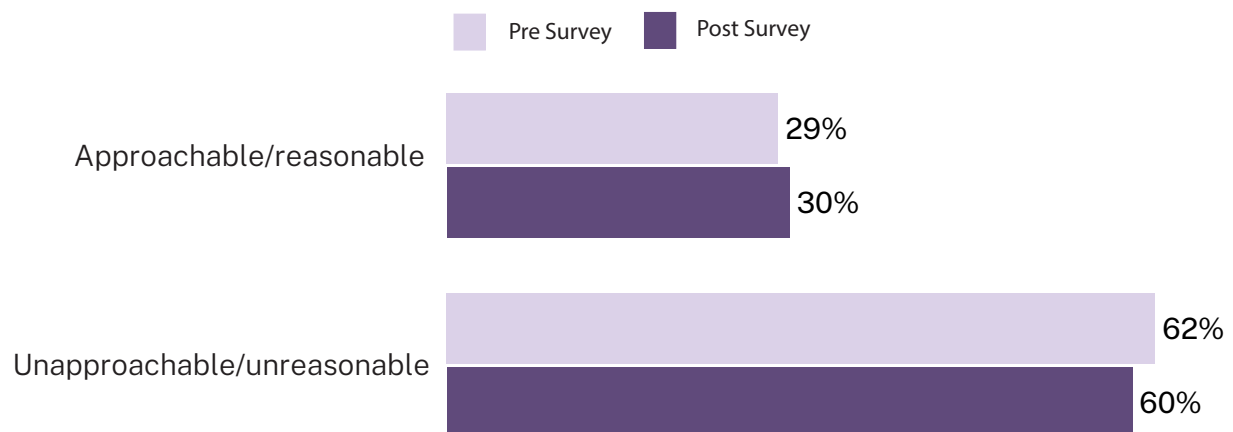


Following participation in a CD&D debate or dialogue event, student data shows...

An increase of 7 percentage points among Independents and Republicans in viewing Democrats as approachable and reasonable; and a decrease of 3 percentage points in viewing Democrats as unapproachable and unreasonable.



An increase of 1 percentage point among Independents and Democrats in viewing Republicans as approachable and reasonable; and a decrease of 2 percentage points in viewing Republicans as unapproachable and unreasonable.



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Questions? Contact the CD&D Team

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