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Does an economics education affect student policy views?

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- As economics educators, one of our primary goals is to teach students how the economy works, including aspects that they may not have learned about or even considered before.
- Plus, the use of policy examples to illustrate key theoretical points is both insightful and engaging to students.
- As a result, exposure to an economics course **may** result in students changing their policy views.
- Of course, some research suggests that providing information that goes against someone's previously-held beliefs can, in fact, lead them to double down on those previous beliefs.
- So, what happens in a Principles of Microeconomics classroom?



Disclaimer

- This is NOT a research study designed to successfully navigate peer review!
- It's just meant to be a fun, hopefully a bit insightful, exercise.
- Plus, it's another interesting way to incorporate iClicker in the classroom.

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- (And you get to play along.)



Details

- The respondents are students from two sections of Principles of Microeconomics at the University of Missouri in the Spring 2024* semester.
- Students were asked the following, largely normative, questions both prior to the introduction of the related topic and immediately following.
- Some of the questions are longstanding ones that I've used in my course for years. Others are new ones I added specifically for this analysis.



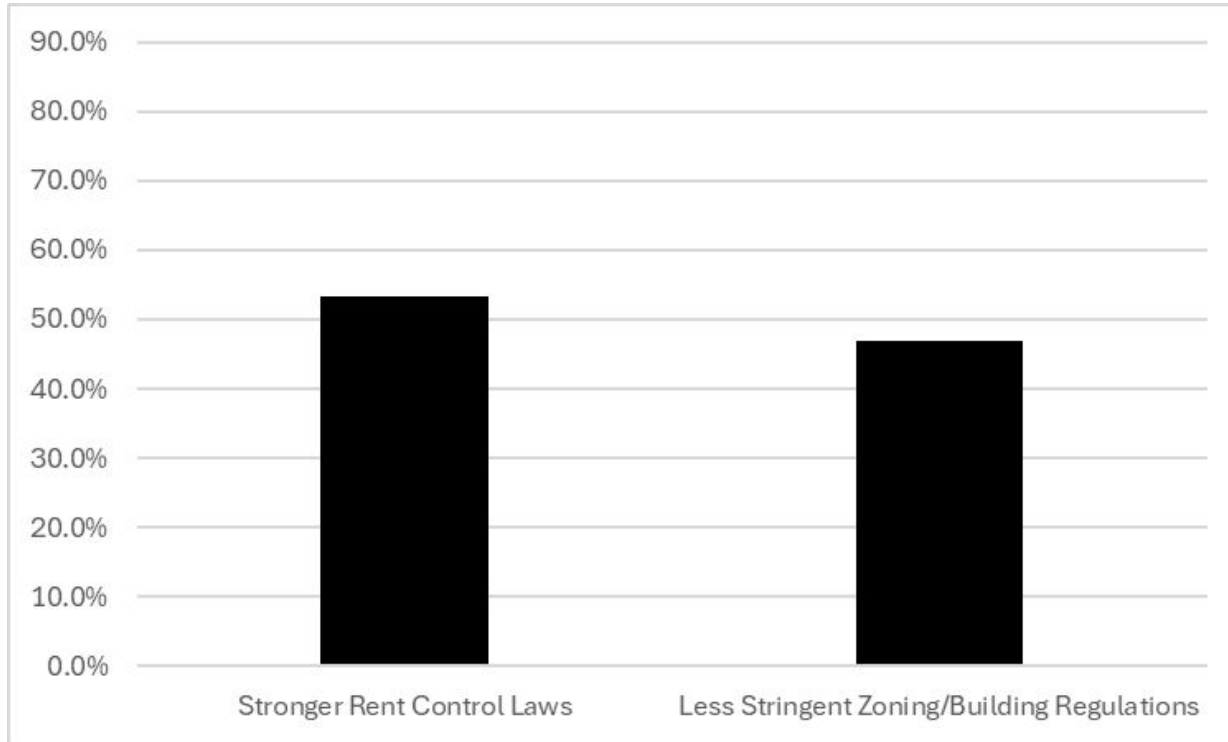
Details

- Results are presented for students who were present and answered both the pre- and post-questions.
- N varies from 416 to 681* (mean = 563.7).
- The results are very similar if expanded to include all responses, regardless of whether the student answered the questions both pre and post.

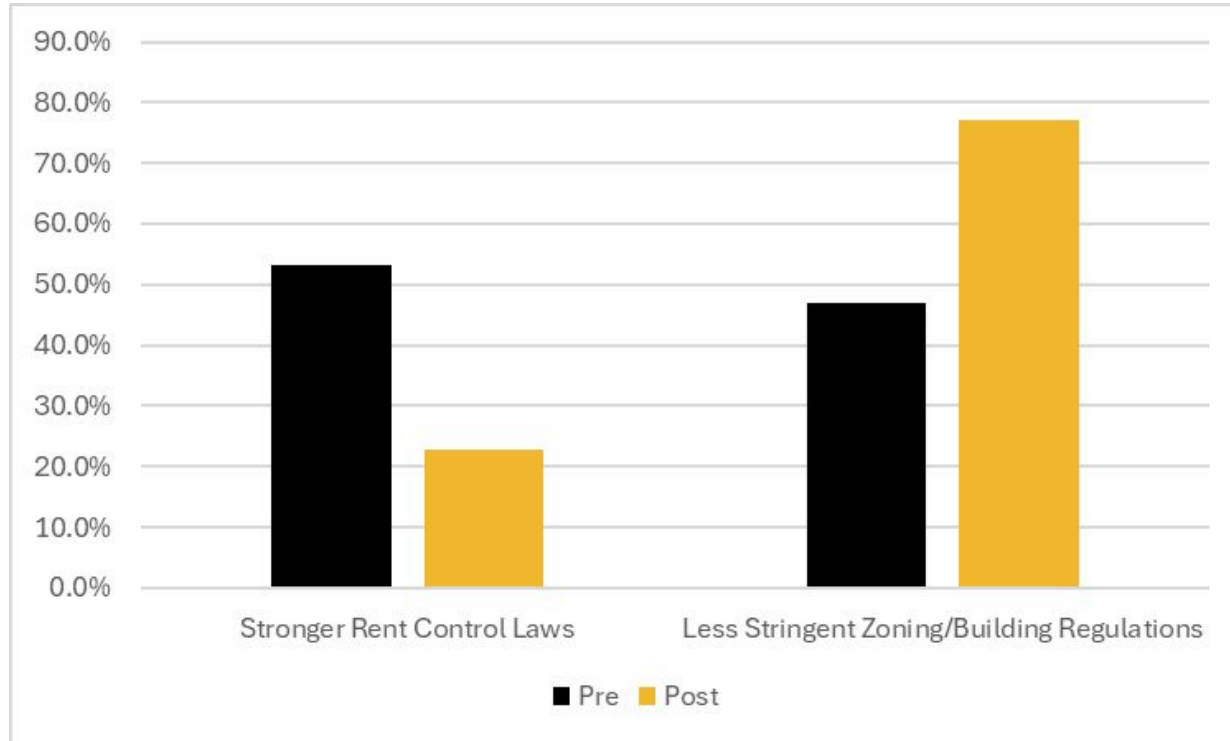
iClicker Time!

- Which do you think is the better policy response to rising housing costs?
 - A) Stronger rent control laws
 - B) Less stringent zoning and building regulations

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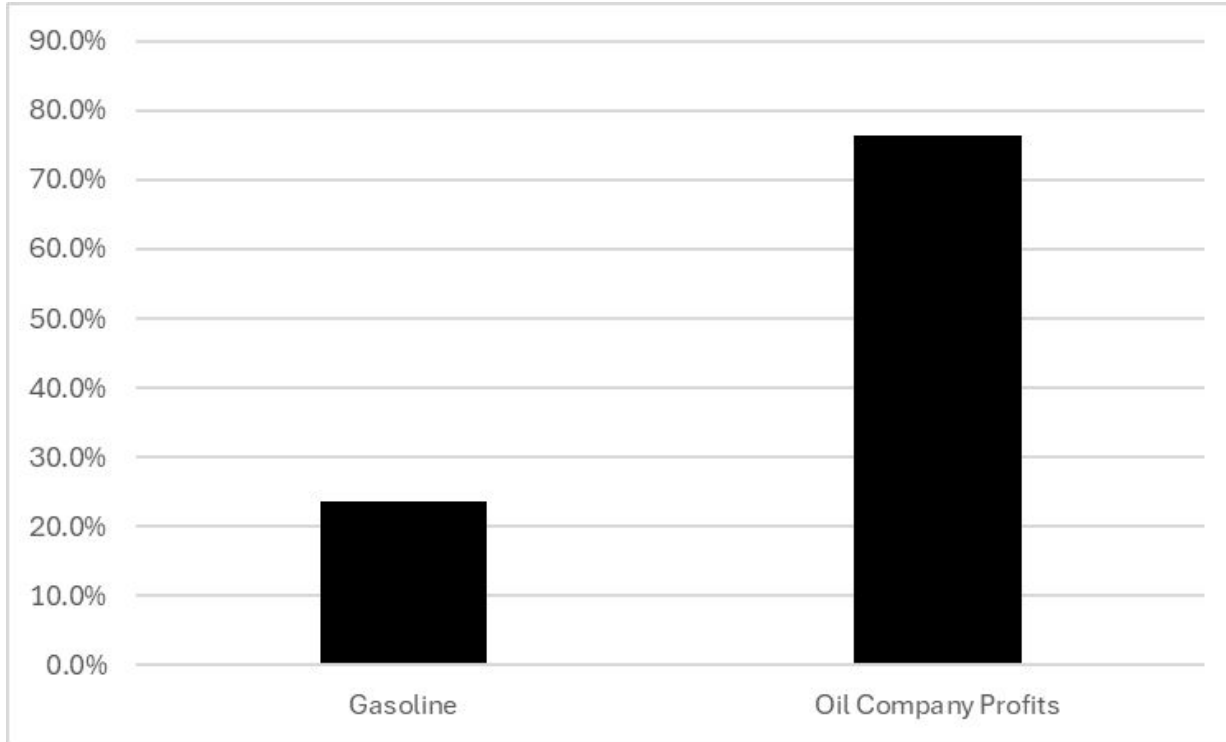
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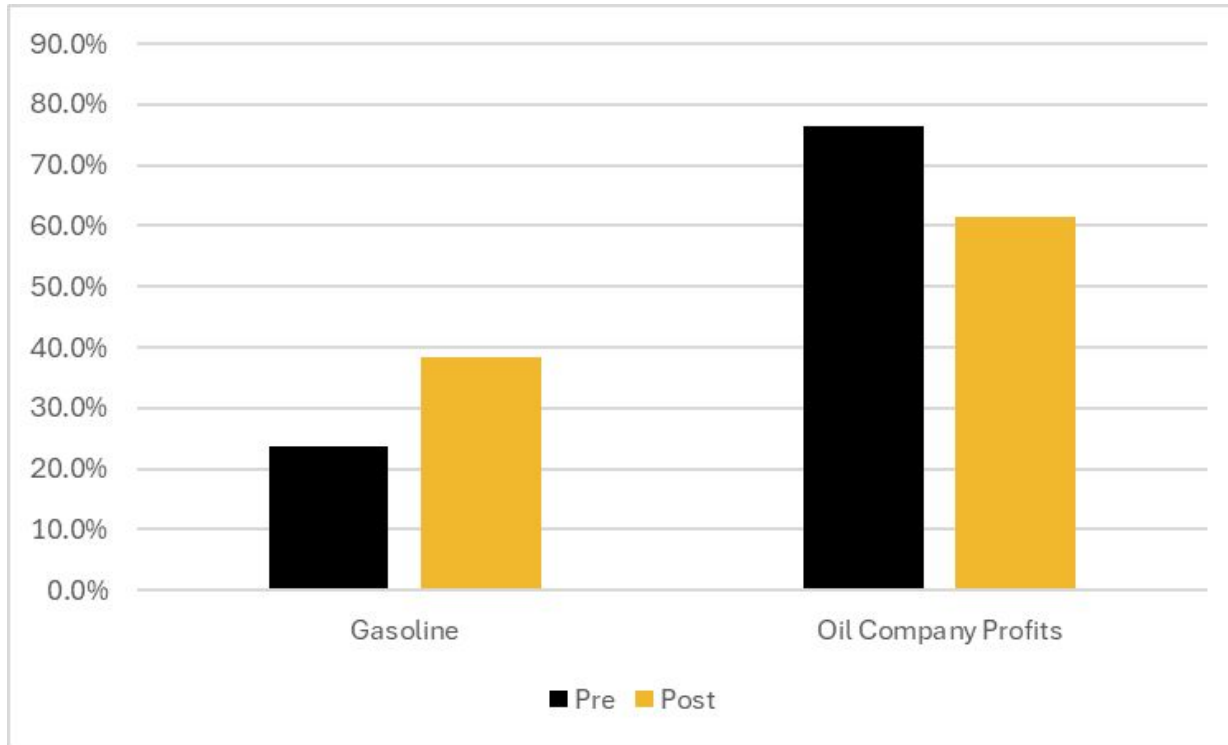
iClicker Time!

- Which would you prefer the government to levy a tax on
 - A) Gasoline or
 - B) Oil company profits

iClicker Time!



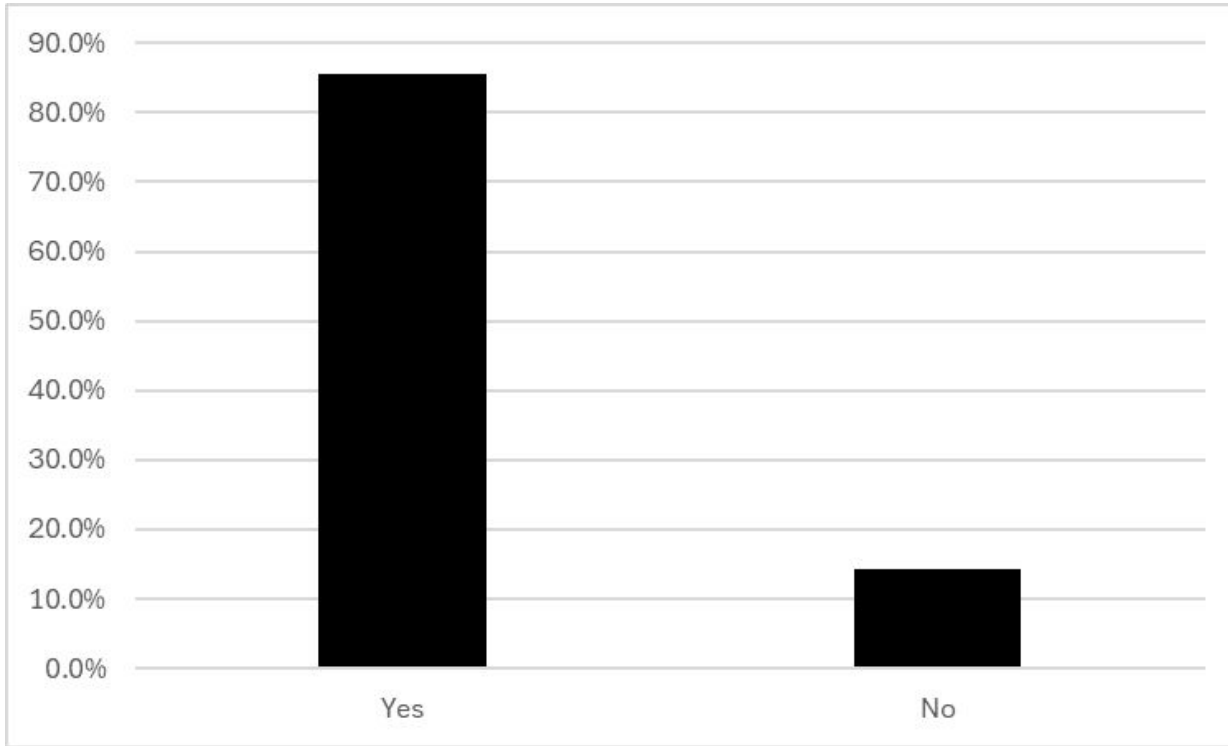
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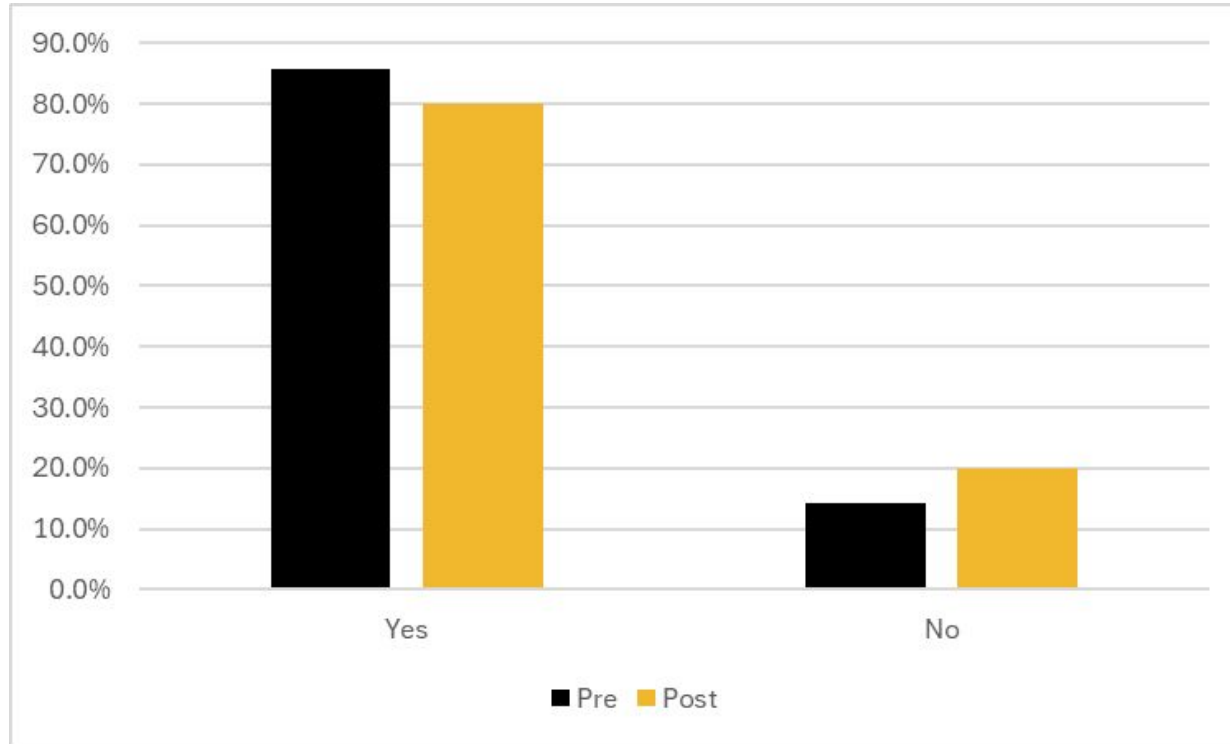
iClicker Time!

- Should we allow a market for kidneys, i.e., allow people to be paid in exchange for providing a kidney to a patient who needs one?
 - A) Yes
 - B) No

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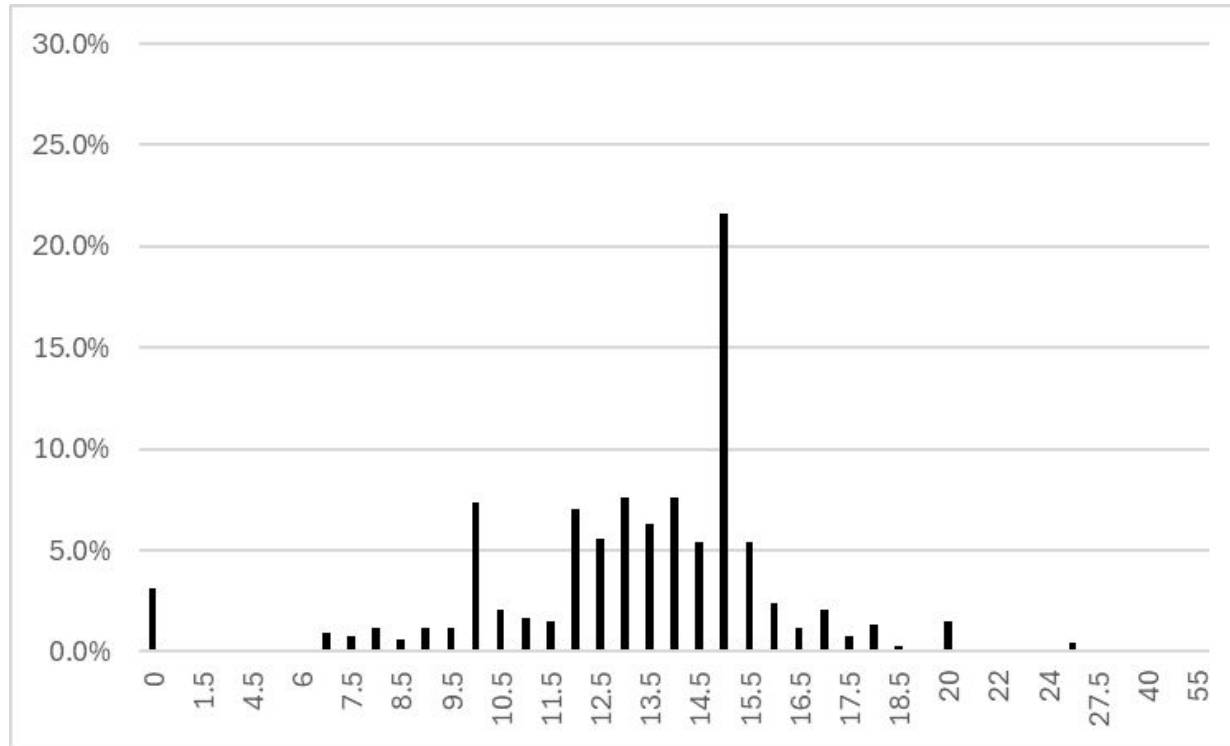
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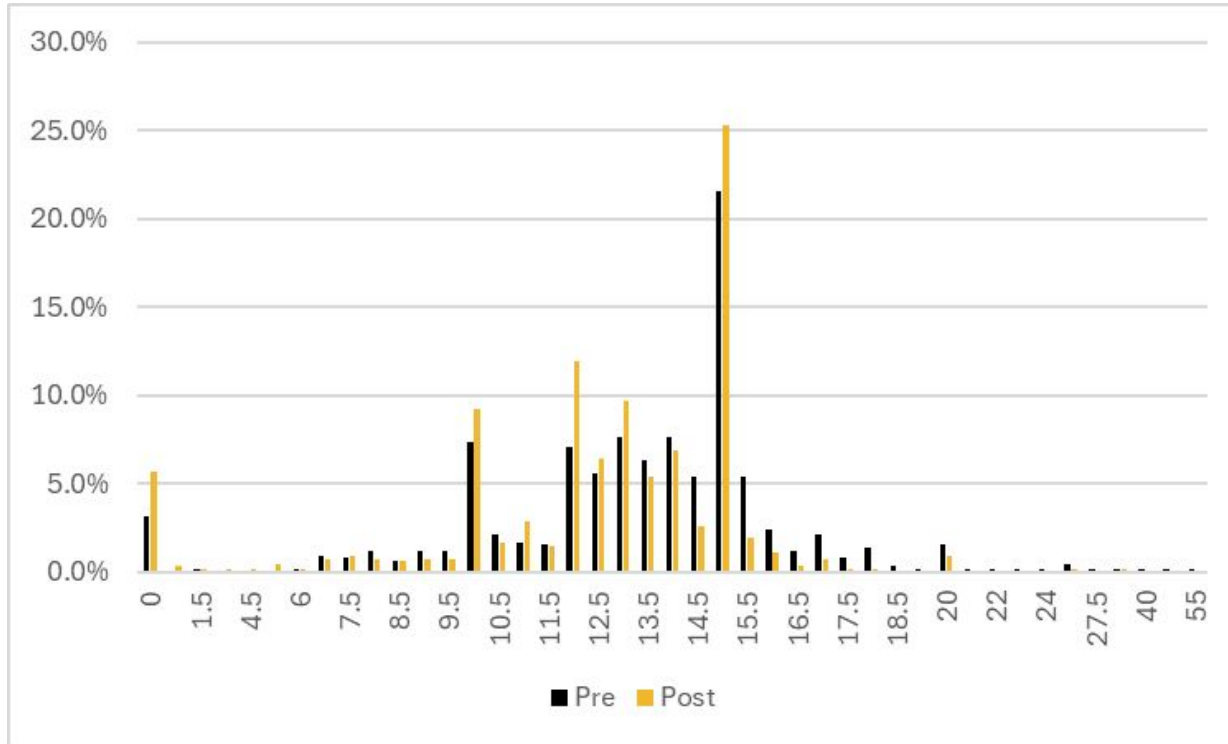
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- I believe the federal minimum wage should be set at _____. (Round your answer to the nearest \$0.50.)

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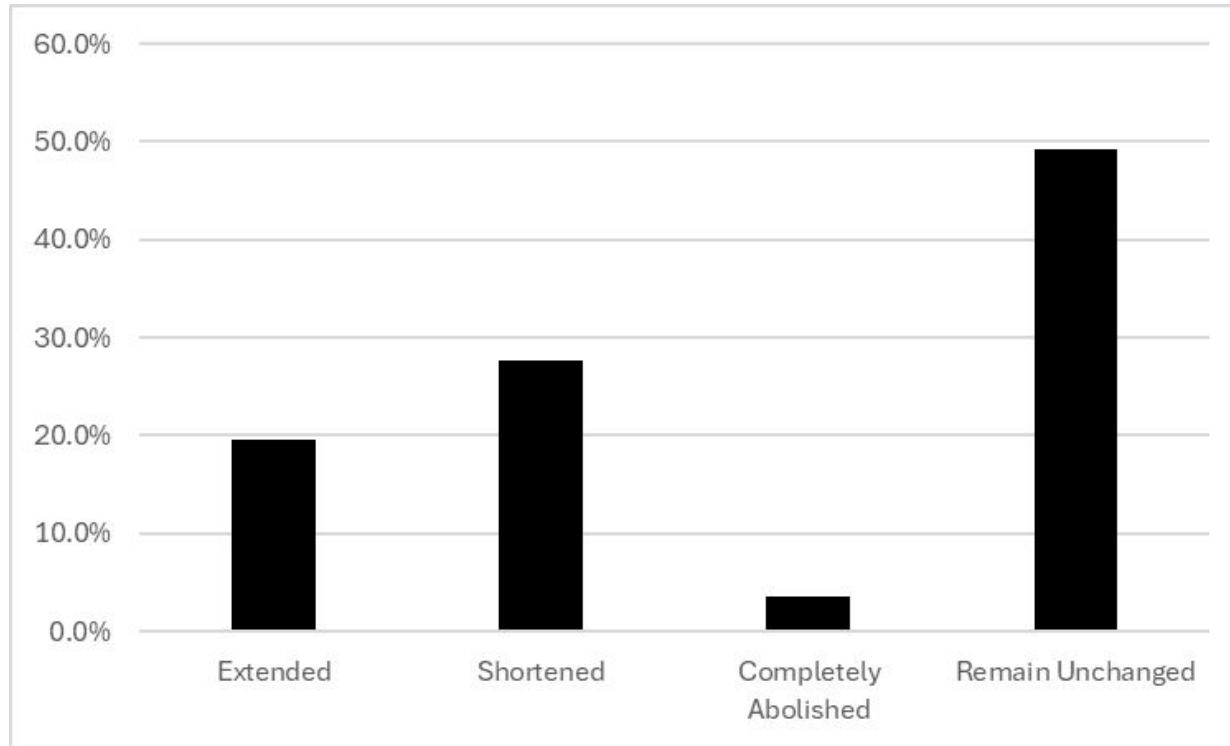
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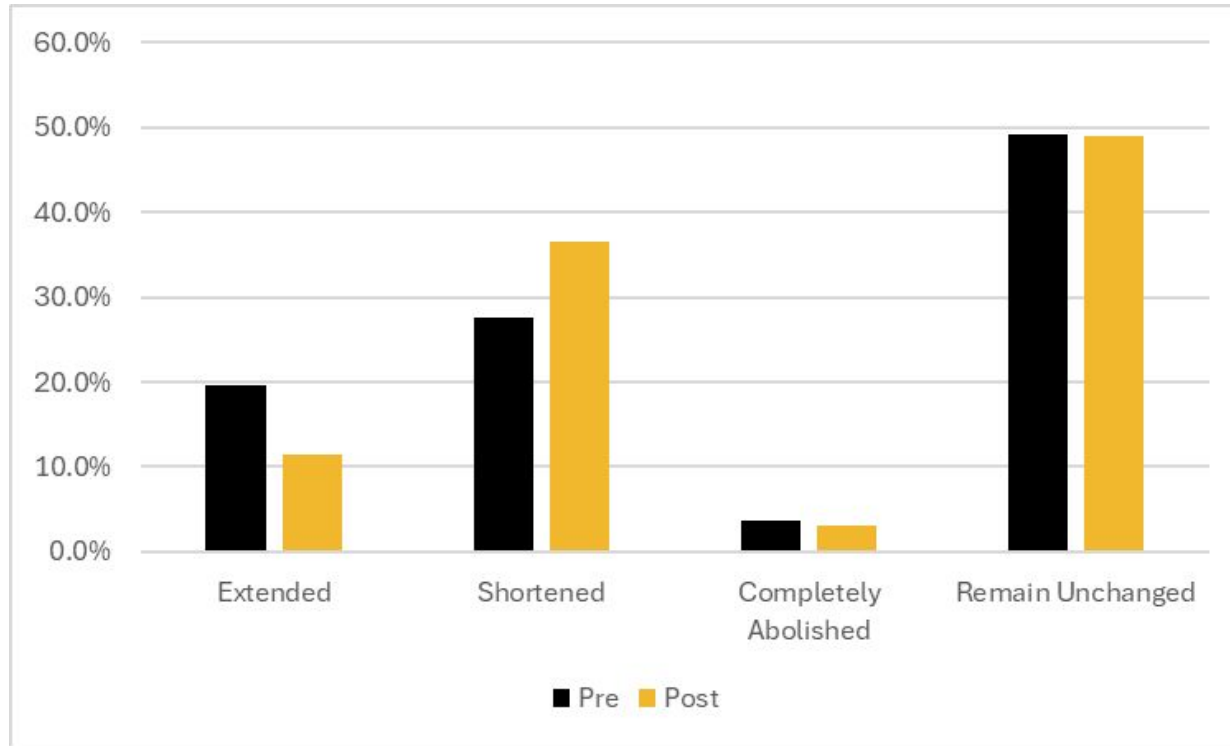
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- I think that US patent lengths should be
 - A) Extended
 - B) Shortened
 - C) Completely Abolished
 - D) Remain Unchanged

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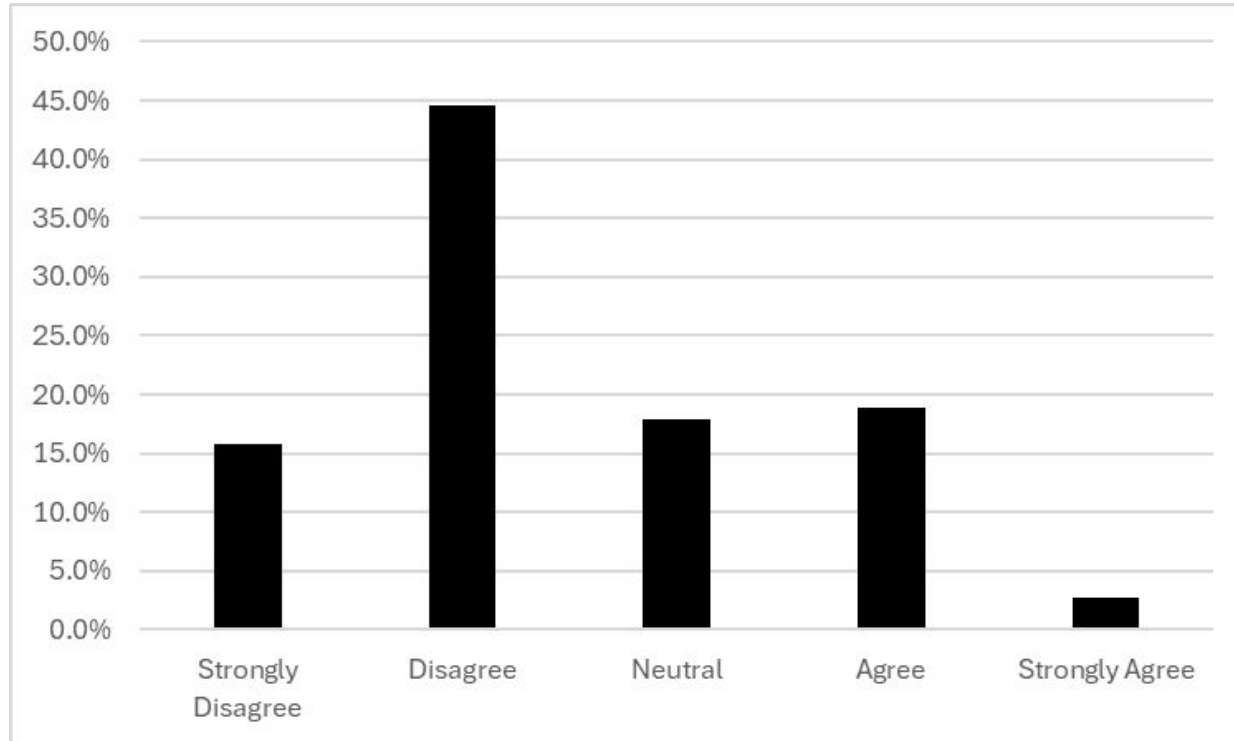
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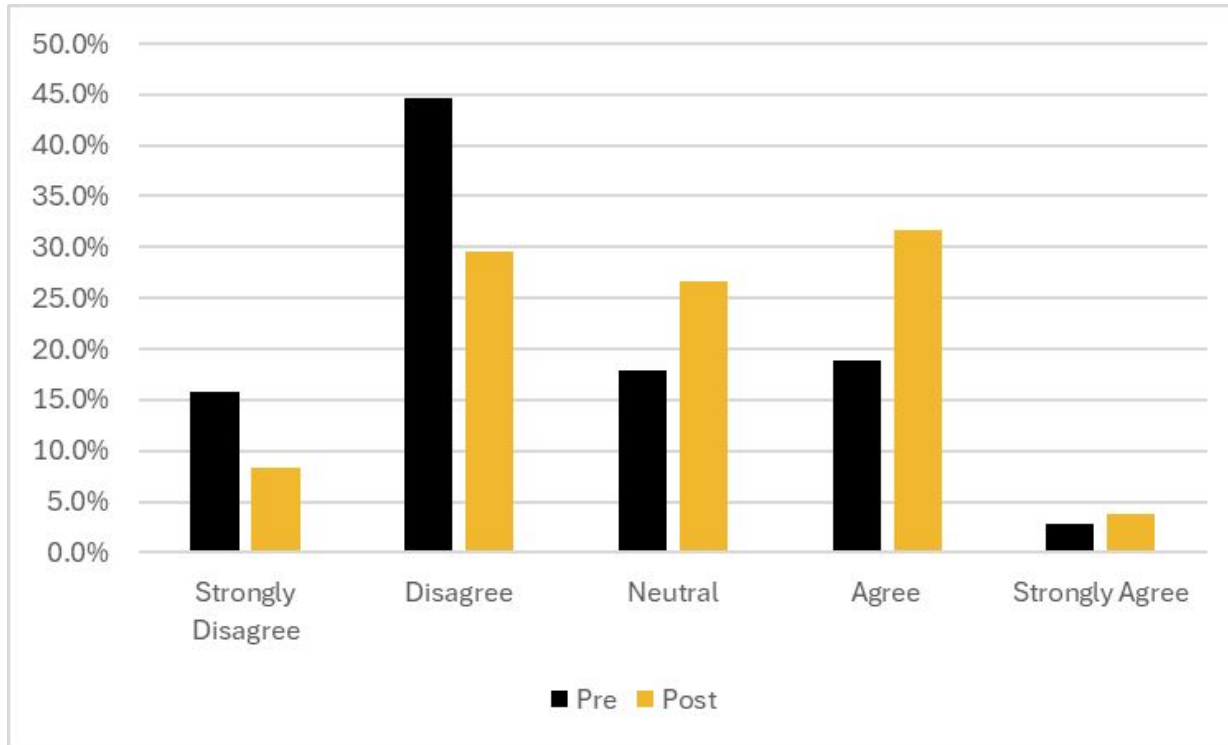
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- I think that it's okay for firms to charge different prices to different customers for the same product.
 - A) Strongly Disagree
 - B) Disagree
 - C) Neutral/No Opinion
 - D) Agree
 - E) Strongly Agree

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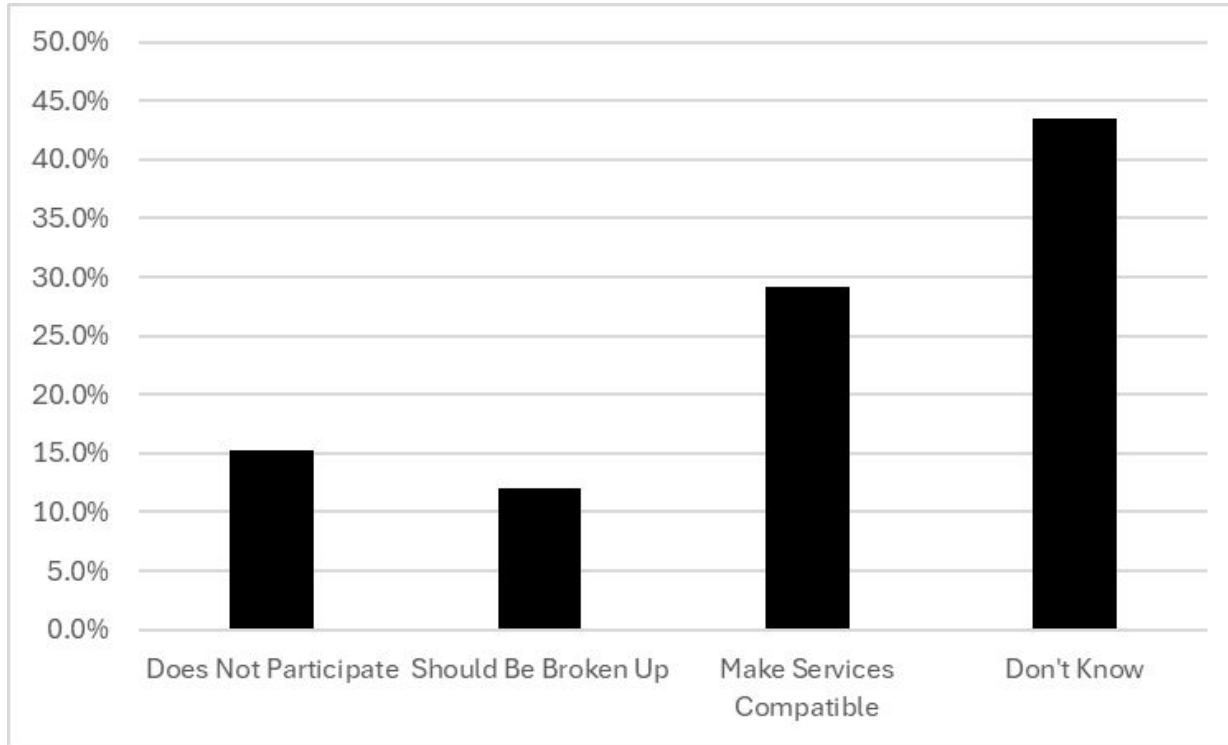
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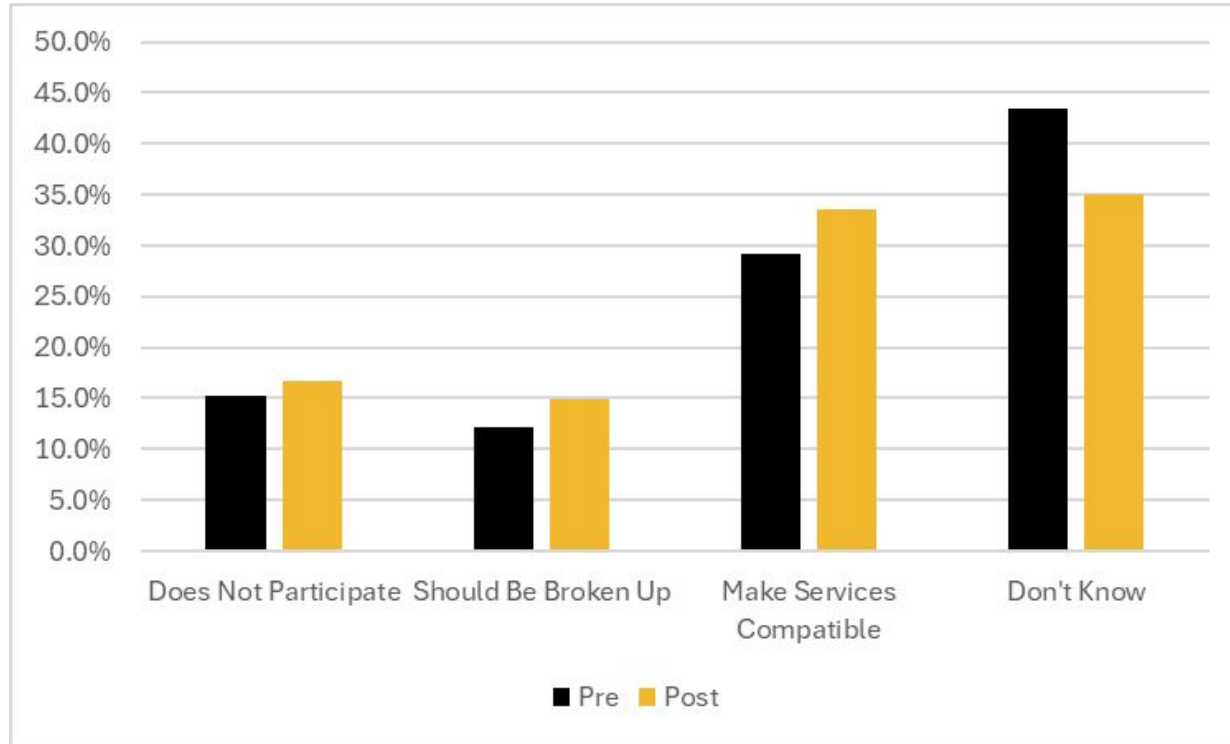
iClicker Time!

- Which of the following statements is closest to your current views.
 - A) Google does not participate in anti-competitive practices.
 - B) Google participates in anti-competitive practices and should be broken up.
 - C) Google participates in anti-competitive practices and should be forced to make their services more compatible to outside developers.
 - D) Google participates in anti-competitive practices, but I don't know how they should be punished.

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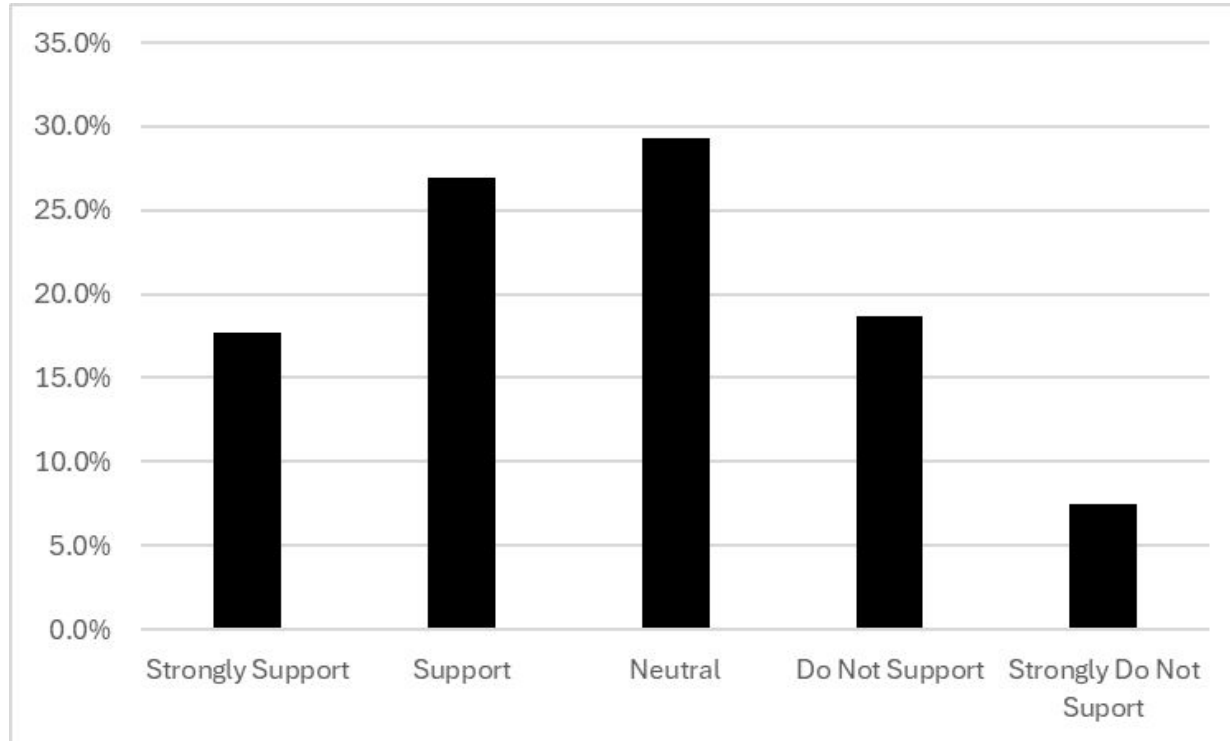
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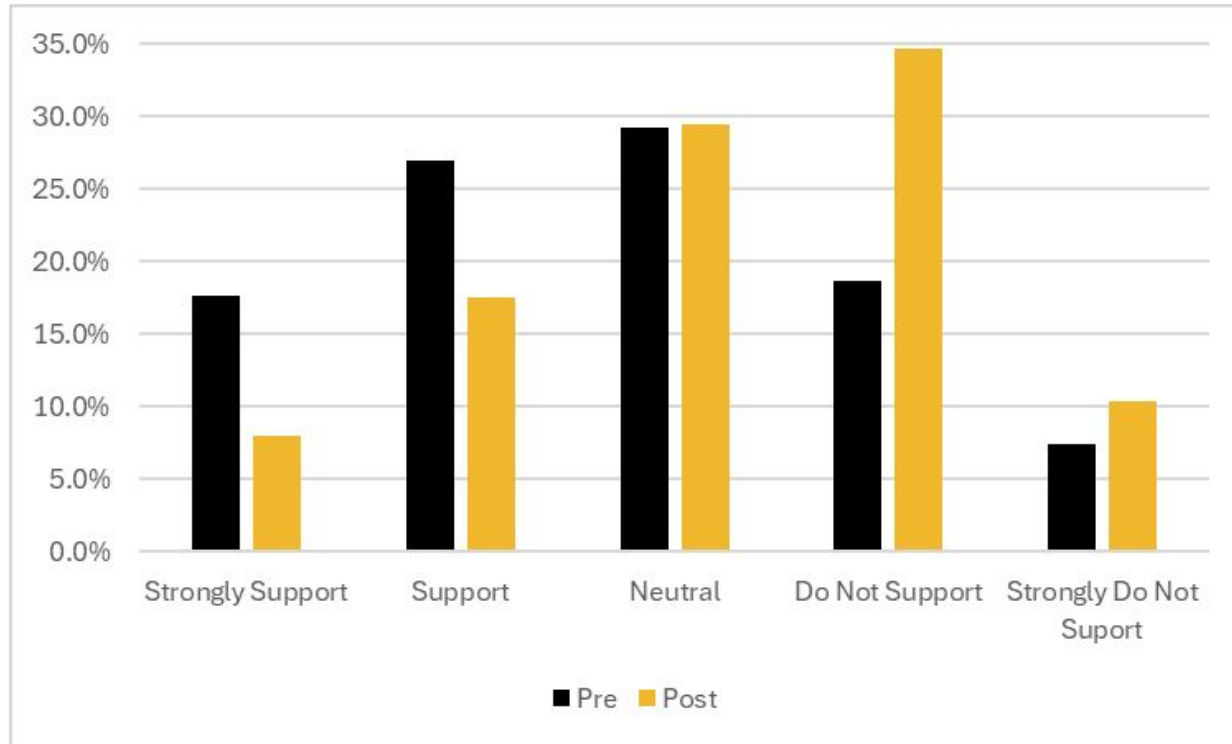
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- Do you support governmental policies designed to make college education free for all students?
 - A) Strongly Support
 - B) Support
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Do Not Support
 - E) Strongly Do Not Support

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Conclusions

- Some shifts in student policy views are observed following classroom lectures on the related economic content.
- Obviously, we can only see a short-term shift.
- It would be interesting to follow up with the students at the multiple points in the future to see how long these shifts are sustained.
- It could also be insightful to break down the results by grade, attendance level, and other factors.

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Q&A

