

**UNDERSTANDING CULTURES
AND SOCIETIES THROUGH
SOCCER IN JAPAN, AMERICA,
AND MEXICO**

JULIO TÉLLEZ

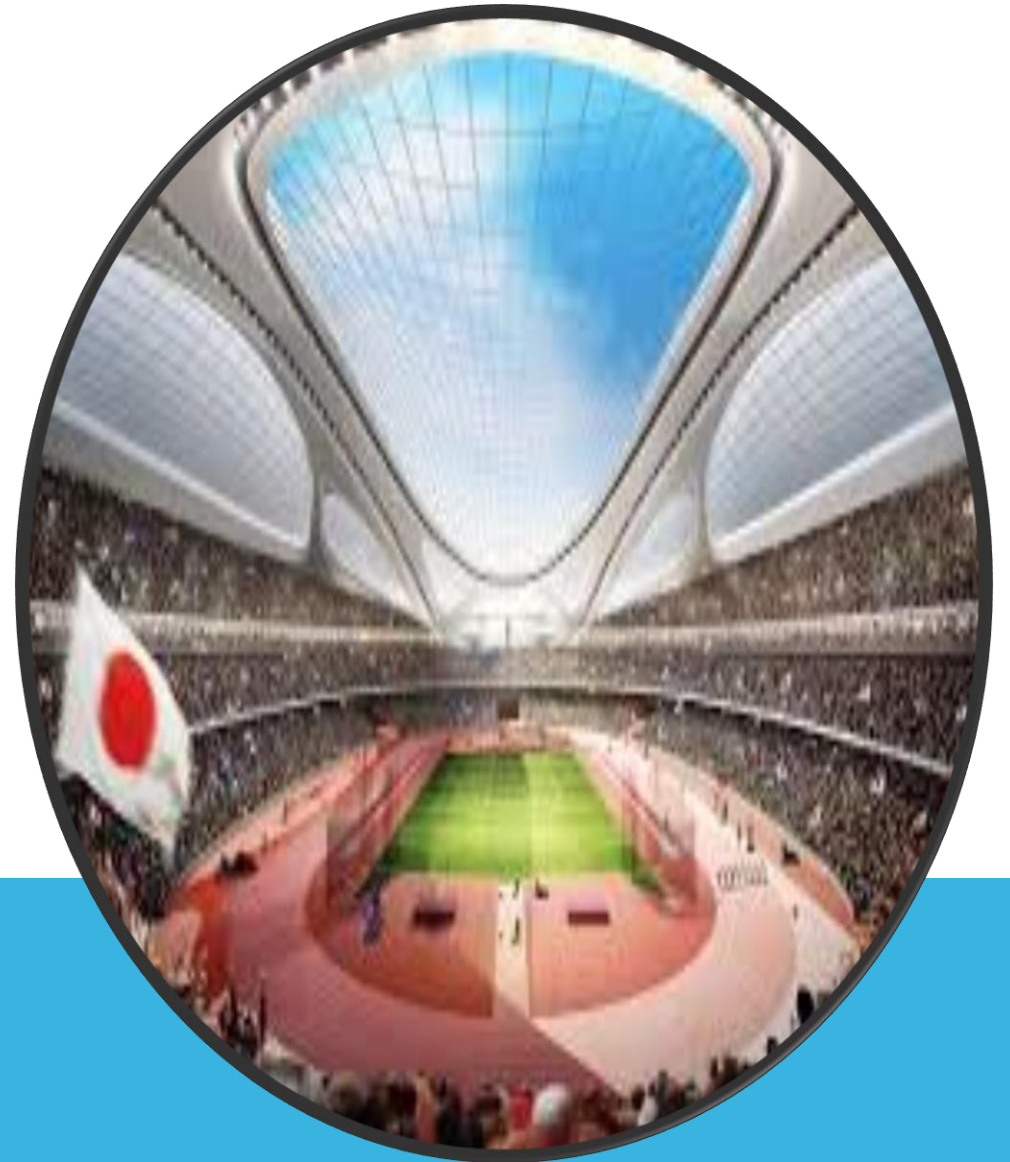
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OUTLINE

- **Significance of Study**
- **Research Questions**
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- **Research Method**
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SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- **I have practiced soccer since I was a little boy.**
- **Soccer is a very popular sport around the world, and I wanted to know the reasons for its popularity.**
- **I became interested in the influence of soccer and society during my time studying abroad. I thought that the way of practicing soccer in Japan and Mexico differ from each other.**
- **Through this research, I would like to understand how society influences people's views toward soccer.**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. In what ways soccer impacts the lives of young people in these three nations?
1. What contributes to the popularity of soccer in these countries and how they are different



RESEARCH BACKGROUND



A Look at History of soccer

Influence of culture and society

- Nationalism and patriotism
- Soccer and education
- Various issues in society

Soccer and the role of men and women

- The “A sport for men” idea
- The role of women

A LOOK AT HISTORY OF SOCCER

In Japan

- Japan Soccer League was created (1965)
- Creation of a women's league (1980)
- Birth of J-League (1993)

In Mexico

- Liga Mexicana (1902)
- 2007 Birth of Super Liga (women's league)
- Creation of Liga MX

In the U.S.

- 1884 Amateur Era (AFA)
- National Women's Soccer League birth (2013)
- MLS inception (1996)

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Soccer and Education

- **“...sports reveal what is possible. American kids’ performance on the field shows just how well they can do when expectations are high and they put their minds to it.”**

(Kolbert, 2013)

- **In the words of a Mexican soccer player “In these violent times, sports represent the best option for children and other young people to get ahead in life.”**

(Pereztrejo, 2014)

- **“Soccer teams have an average roster size of 28 players but only a maximum of 9.9 athletic scholarships to award per team.”**

(Scholarshipstats.com)

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Various issues in society

- **Regarding violence in Mexico “Build the fields, promoters promised, and peace will come. Youth gangs will spar with balls rather than bullets.**

(Althaus, 2011)

- **Regarding violence in the United States “That kind of behavior has no place in our stadium, or in our society, and we strongly condemn it.”**

(Goff, 2008)

- **Chairman of Japanese J-league in regards of racism at the venues “Stadiums and society are the same, this act is an opportunity to send a message that we will not tolerate this, we will act accordingly with FIFA in a stand of ‘No tolerance’.”**

(Mainichi Shimbun PR, 2014)

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Nationalism and Patriotism

- **“Japanese educationalists acknowledged the national value of exercise and the propensity for games to build the esprit de corps needed for a modernizing Japan.”**

(Yasaki, 2003)

- **“Nationalism draws most of us to these games, not a particular love of soccer or hockey or gymnastics. Those are our boys. Those are our girls. That’s why we care.”**

(Brennan, 2014)

- **“sport is a vehicle, in many different ways, for the construction of individual, group, and national identities.”**

(Sasada, 2006)

THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN SOCCER

- **Women's soccer**

- In 1895, the first women's match covered by the news, "There is nothing ungraceful in a girl kicking a football when she has got rid of the skirts which make the action hideous."

(FIFA.com)

- Regarding sexism in soccer, the women's soccer continues to grow, especially the Japanese team who won the 2011 FIFA World Cup and the runners-up, the American team.

- Mexican soccer player on the idea that soccer is for men "There are people who look at us and point fingers at us, they think soccer is a sport only for men"

(Reinares, 2011)



RESEARCH METHOD

- **Subjects/Participants of the study:**
 - **65 University Students**
 - 22 Japanese university students
 - 14 male / 8 female
 - 20 American university students
 - 12 male / 8 female
 - 23 Mexican university students
 - 16 male / 7 female
 - **Research Tool**
 - **Online Survey (Google form)**
 - English, Japanese and Spanish Surveys

Research Findings 1

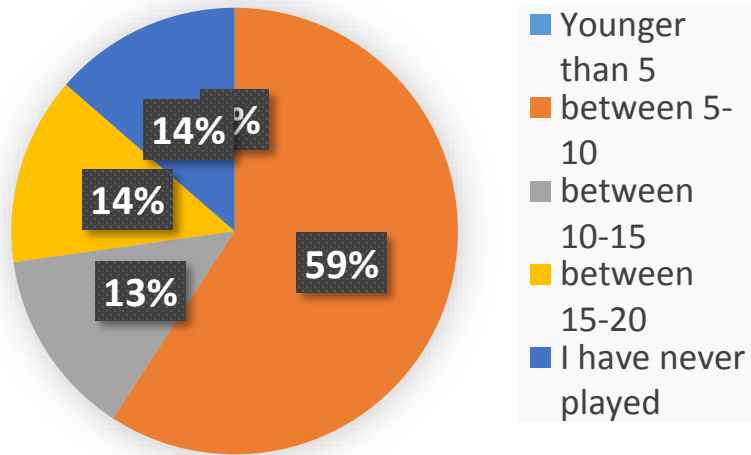
Research Question 1:

In what ways soccer impacts the lives of young people in these three nations?

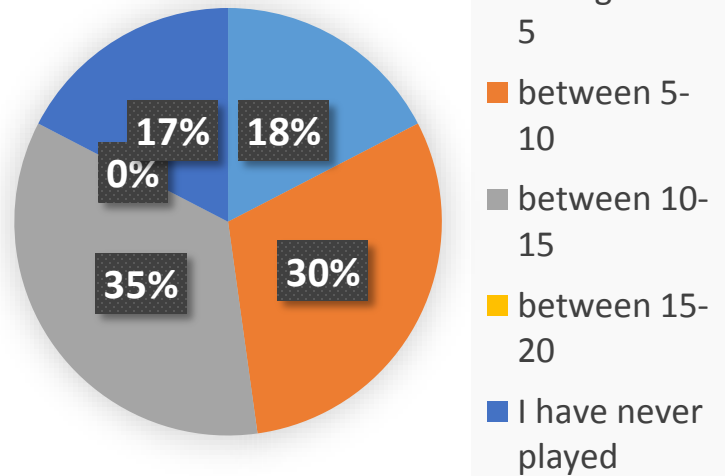
Age to Start Soccer

Question: At what age did you begin practicing? (soccer)

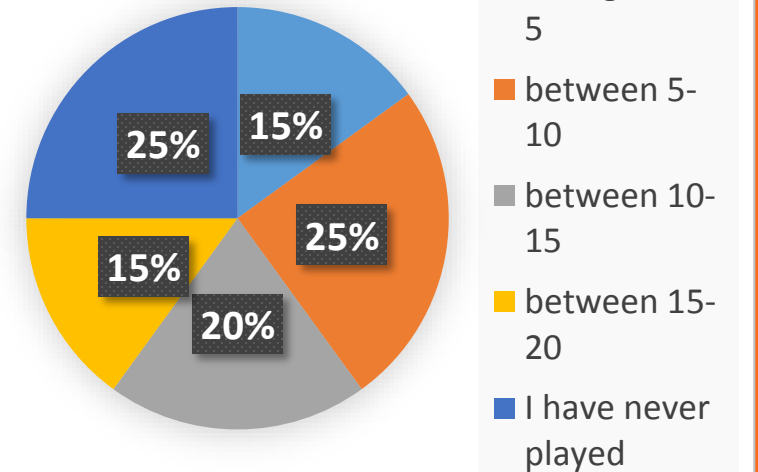
Japanese



Mexicans



Americans

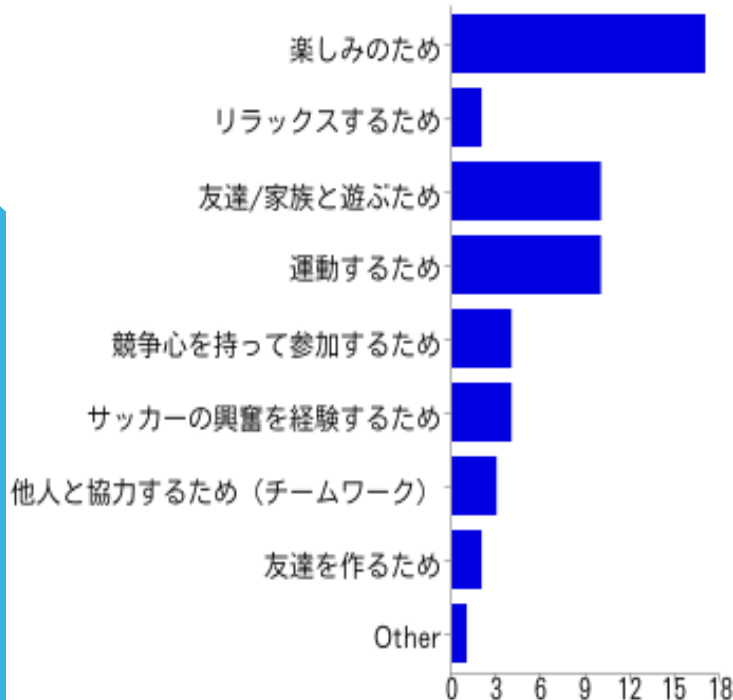


While the practice of soccer in Mexico and the US start at an very early age, people in Japan do not begin to practice it until the ages of 5-10.

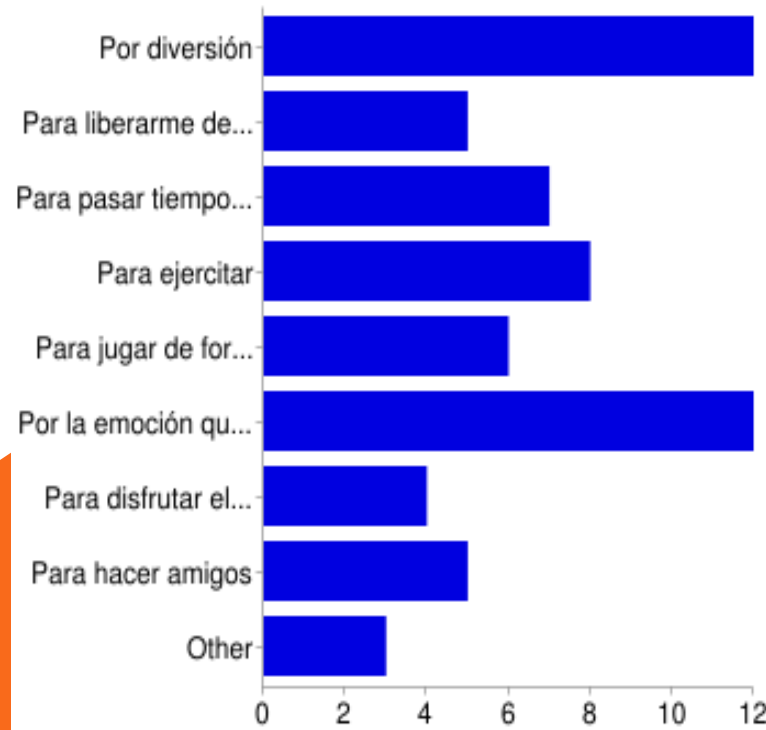
Reasons to practice soccer

Question: Which one of the following would be your reason to practice or like soccer?

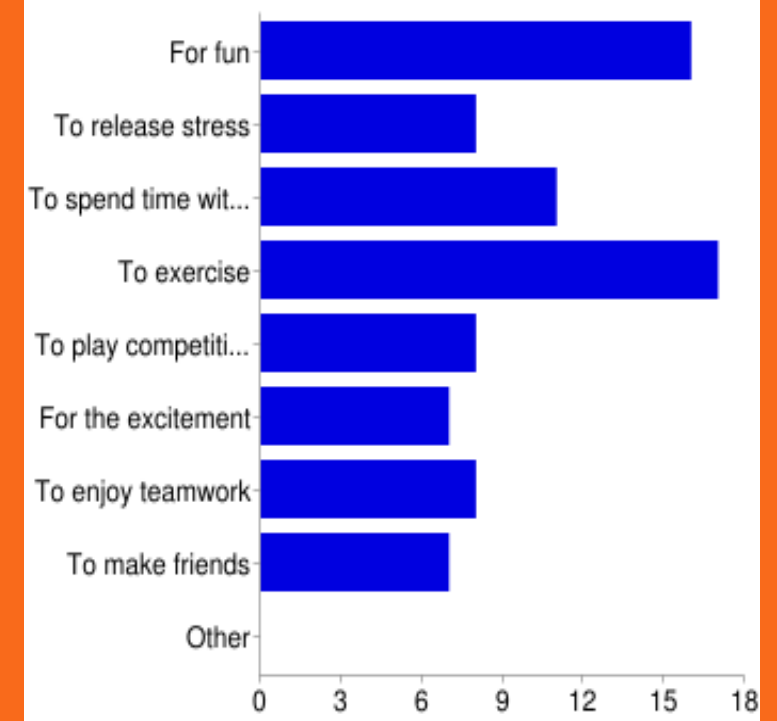
Japan



Mexico



United States

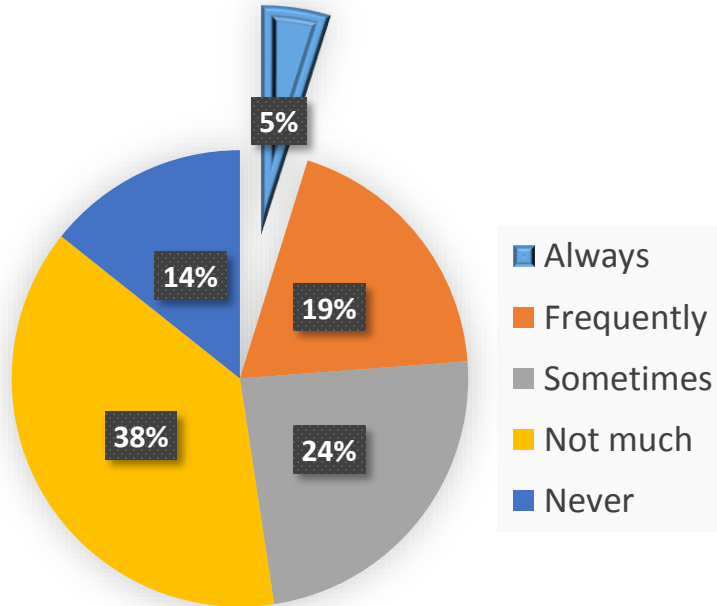


The number of participants that practice soccer for fun was the majority. In Mexico, however, many do it for the excitement the sport generates. While in the United States many people considered it a good exercise.

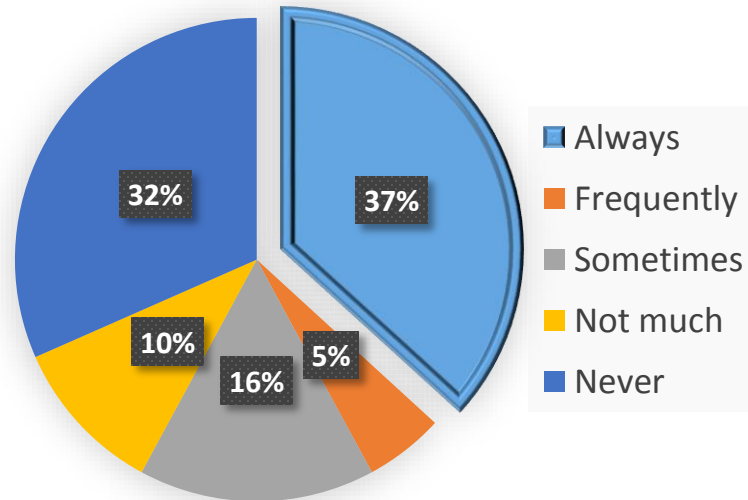
Influence of Parent

Question: Has your father influenced your decision of playing/watching soccer?

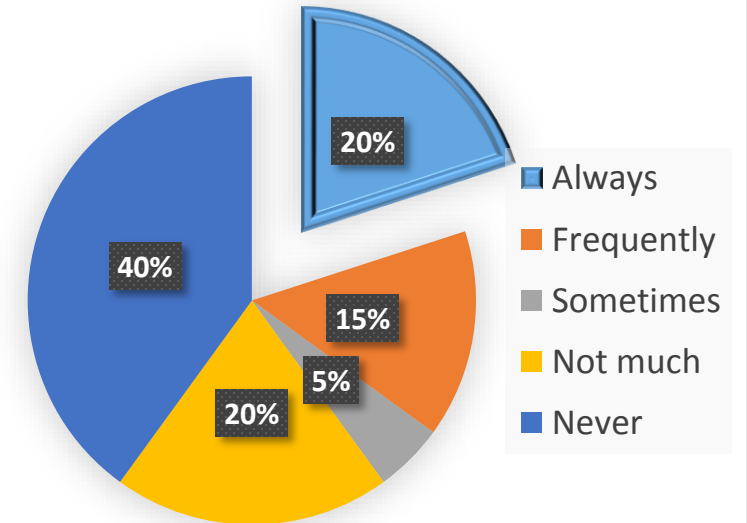
Japanese



Mexicans



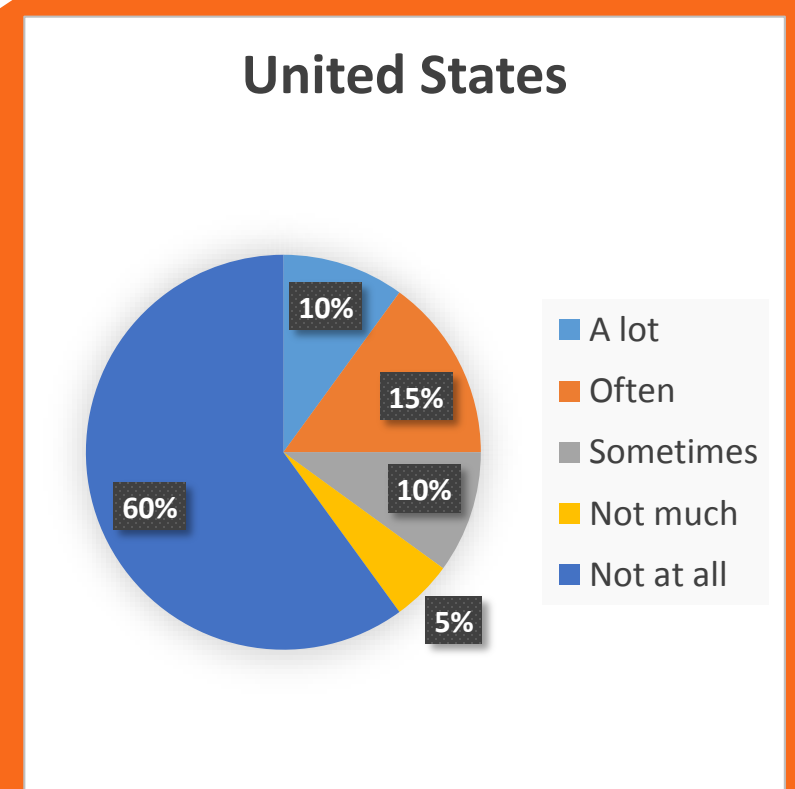
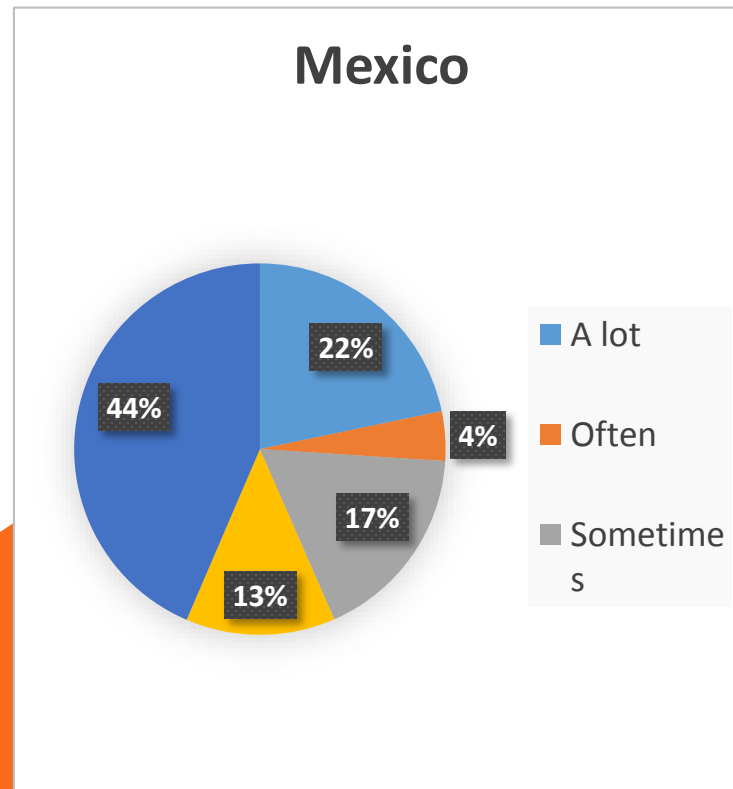
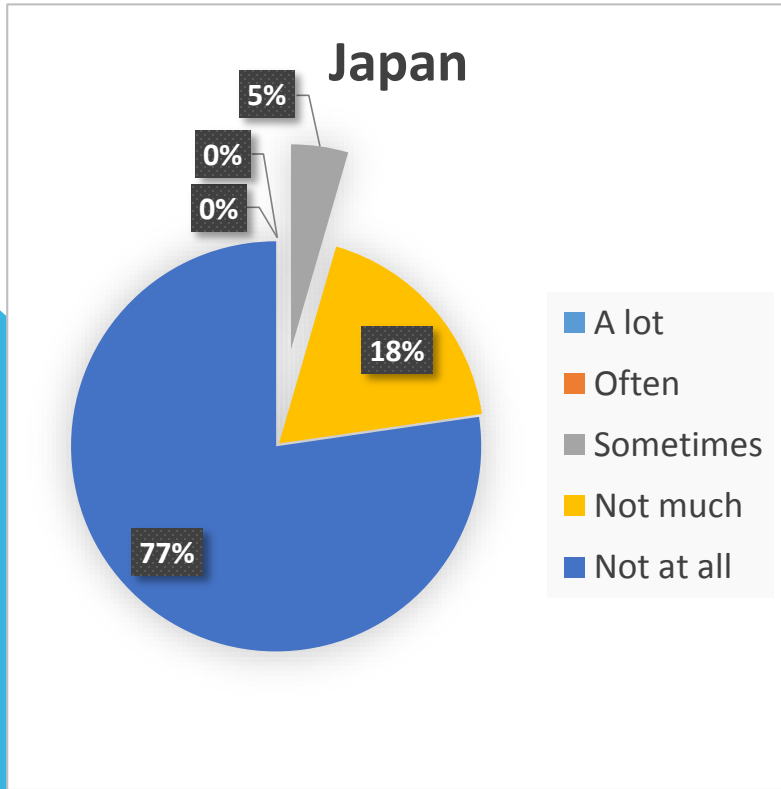
Americans



In Mexico, the influence of the father seems to be significant. On the other hand, fathers' influence in Japan and the United States is not as strong.

Becoming a professional player

Question: Have you ever thought about becoming a professional player?



It would seem as if Japanese people do not have any interest at all on becoming professional players. However, 43% of Mexican participants and 35% of American participants have given the idea some thought.

Reasons to become a professional player

Question: If the thought of becoming a professional player ever crossed your mind, what would be YOUR MAIN reason to do it?

Options	Japan	Mexico	America
For money	10%	16.7%	18.2%
To travel a lot	0%	5.6%	9.1%
For the love of soccer	60%	55.6%	63.6%
To have fun	20%	11.1%	0%
To become famous	10%	11.1%	9.1%
Other	0%	0%	0%

According to the survey results, the majority of participants replied that they would consider becoming professional players just “for the love of the soccer.”

Factors to become a professional player

Question: In your country, which of the following factors contributes the MOST for a player to become a professional one?

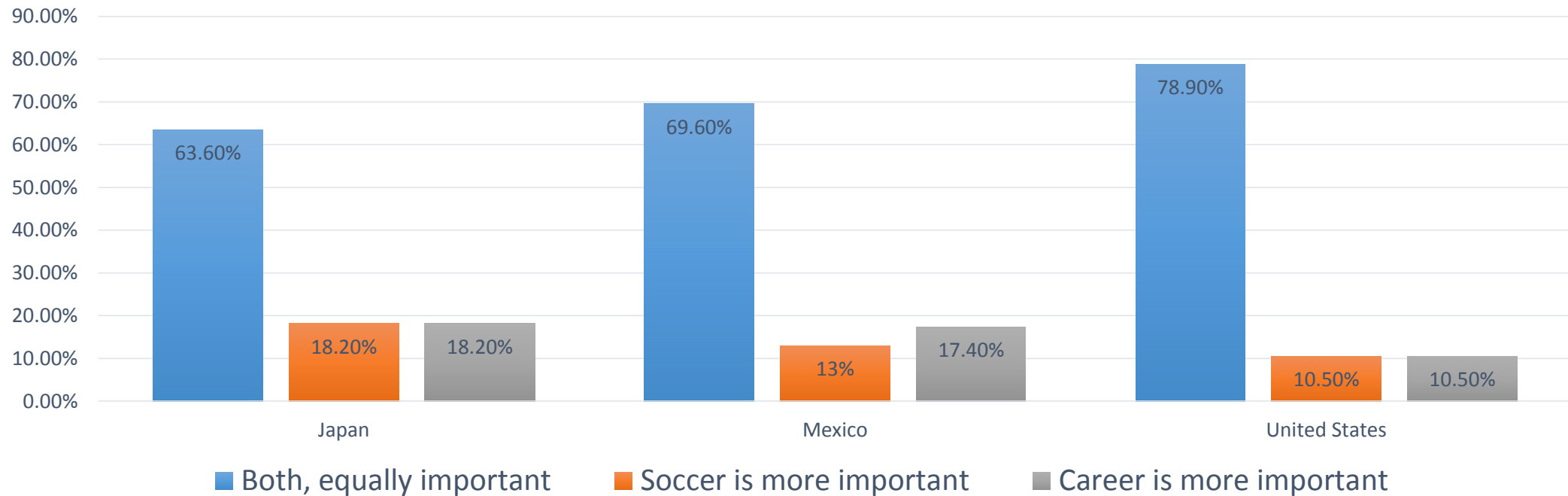
Options	Japan	Mexico	America
Skills	40.9%	34.8%	36.8%
Determination	13.6%	4.3%	10.5%
Discipline	4.5%	4.3%	15.8%
Money	0%	17.4%	21.1%
Connections	0%	39.1%	15.8%
Other	40.9%	0%	0%

Participants who answered “skills” were a lot. The number of Mexican people who picked “connections” were almost equal in number.

Soccer and Education

"In my community, soccer players are encouraged to pursue their educational goals along with their athletic ones"

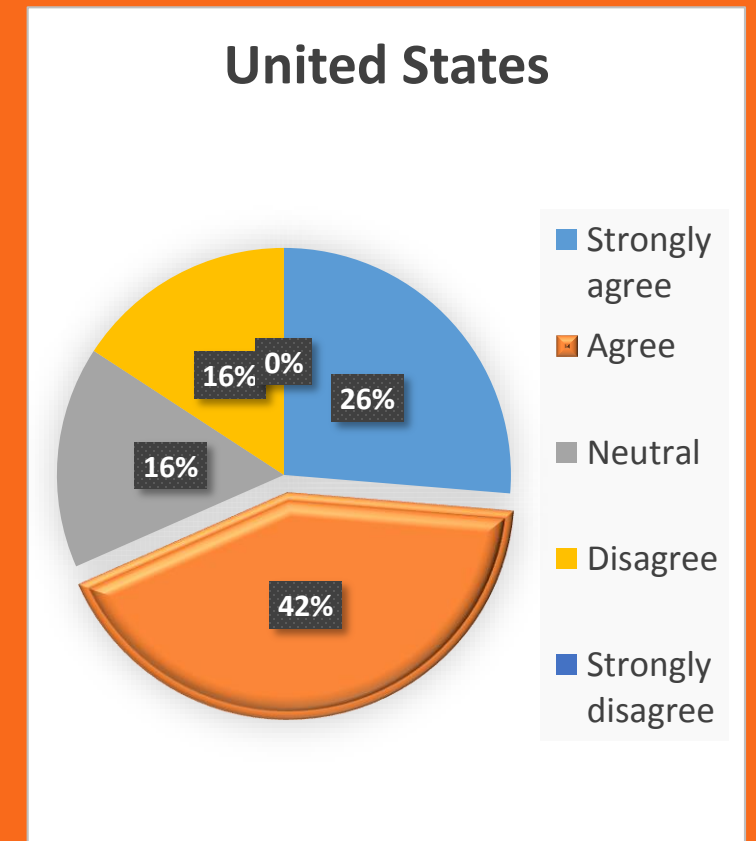
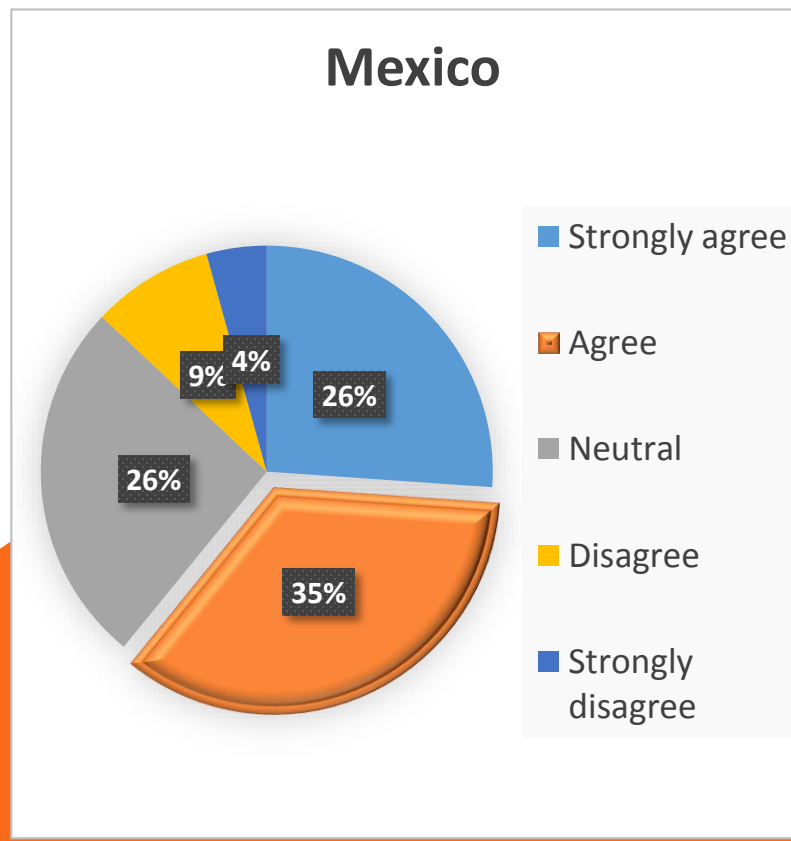
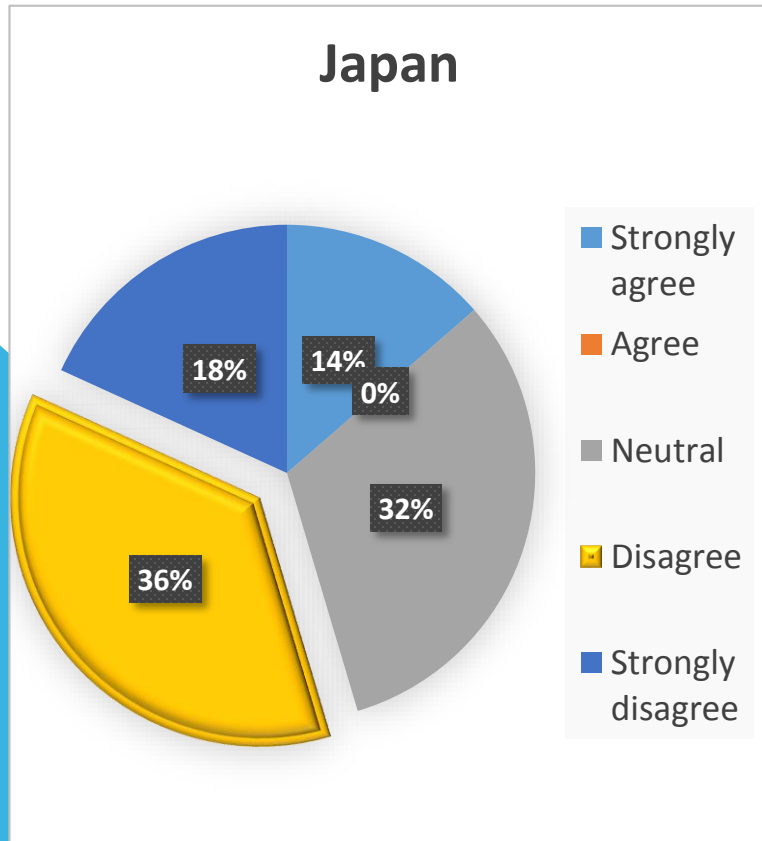
Soccer and school



People from all three countries chose “both are equally important” as their answer. In other words, both, a soccer career and school are important.

Soccer in my community

“Soccer is often used in my community to help people stay away from drugs and other addictions.”



61% of Mexican and 68% of American participants agreed on the use of soccer as a way to keep young people away from drugs while only 14% of Japanese participants agreed with this idea.

Soccer's perception in all three countries

Question: Which of the following words best represents how soccer is perceived in your country?
(rank 1-3)

Soccer is perceived as...	Japan	Mexico	United States
Business	#3	#1	
Fair Play	#1		
Collectivism			
A show	#2	#2	#3
Mafia			
Satisfaction (personal)			#1
Fame		#3	#2

For the Japanese, soccer represents “Fair play,” for Americans it represents “personal satisfaction,” while Mexicans think of it as “business.”

Research Question 1: Findings Summary

- American and Mexican people participate in soccer at earlier stages in their lives.
- Most people practice or watch soccer just to have fun.
 - American people, however, seem to use it as a good exercise rather than entertainment.
- Parents' influence in these nations varies...
 - Fathers have a strong influence in Mexican but not so much for Japanese and Americans participants.
- Although skills are important on becoming a professional player, people in Mexico think connections are more necessary.
- Japanese people do not think soccer is a tool to keep people away from drugs.
- Fair play, business and personal satisfaction are how people perceive soccer in Japan, Mexico and the U.S. respectively.

Research Findings 2

Research Question 2:

What contributes to the popularity of soccer in these countries and how are they different?

Domestic clubs vs. International clubs

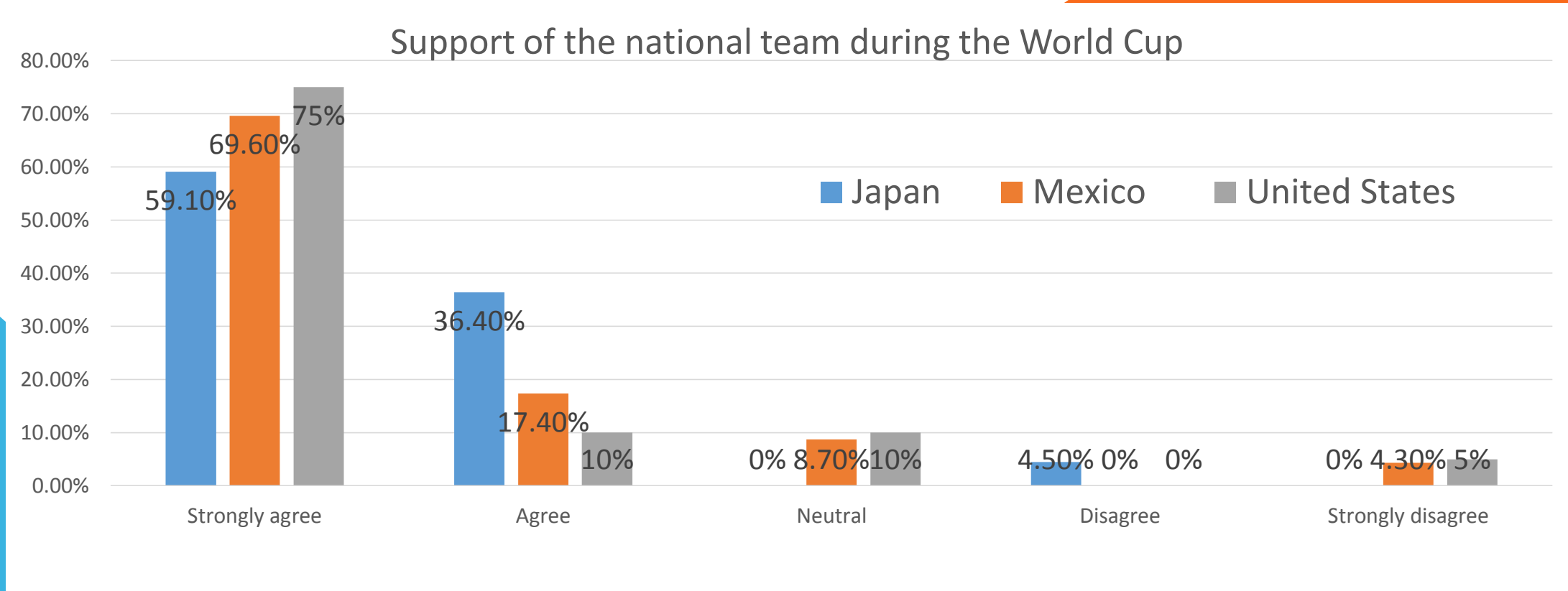
Which one do you prefer, your favorite **international** club or your favorite **domestic** club and why?

Japan	Mexico	United States
International team, since their level is high	International team because they have big names, big stars	International because they are doing better than domestic
International team because the atmosphere in their venues is great!	International club because their level is higher than domestic clubs	International. Domestic is boring .
International because that way I know the names of players participating at World Cup.	International because it seems to be more “ professional ” and more exciting!	International. The style, athleticism and level of skill is far greater than that of a domestic club
Domestic because I support the team that represents my HOMETOWN	Domestic because we MUST ALWAYS support our national clubs first!	Domestic, close to HOME
Domestic because they have players BORN AND RAISED IN JAPAN , I like to support them	Domestic, because my team has only MEXICAN players in its roster, NO FOREIGNERS	I feel more passion with my domestic team because is what I GREW UP liking

People who picked domestic seem to have done so because they perceive it as something familiar, something they identify with. Those who picked international clubs did due to the high level shown by their performances.

Support of the National Team

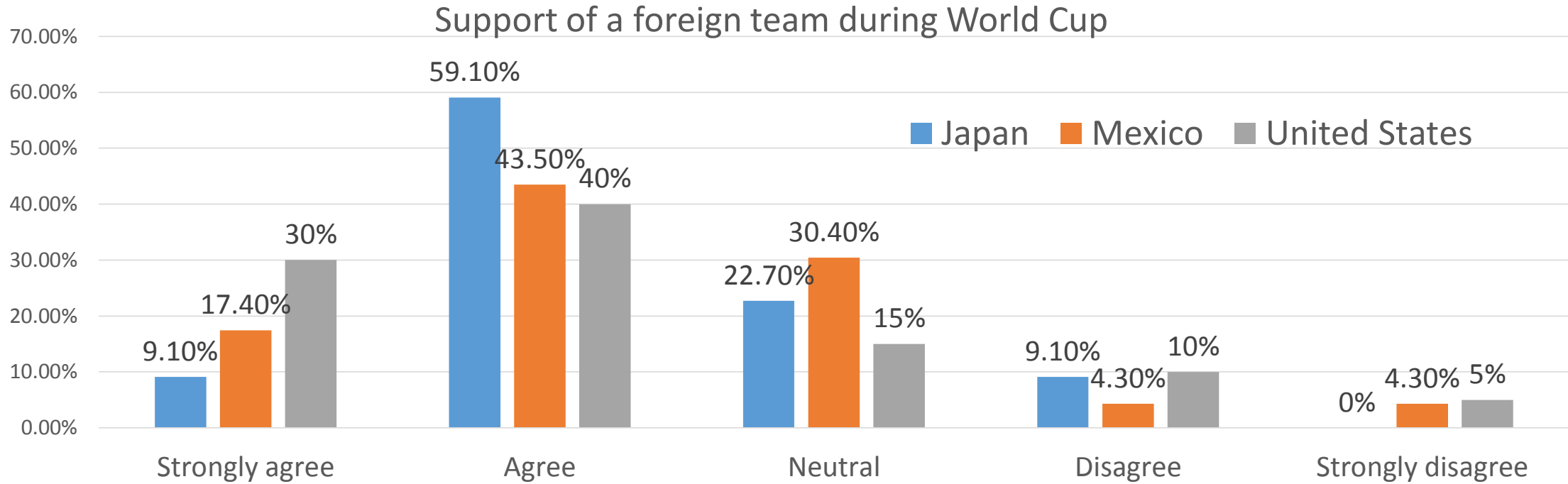
During the FIFA World Cup...



Most people support their national representative during the world cup in all three nations.

Support of Another National Team

During the FIFA World Cup...



Japanese people support other teams from time to time, while American people seem to oppose the idea the most.

Support of the National Team (Reason)

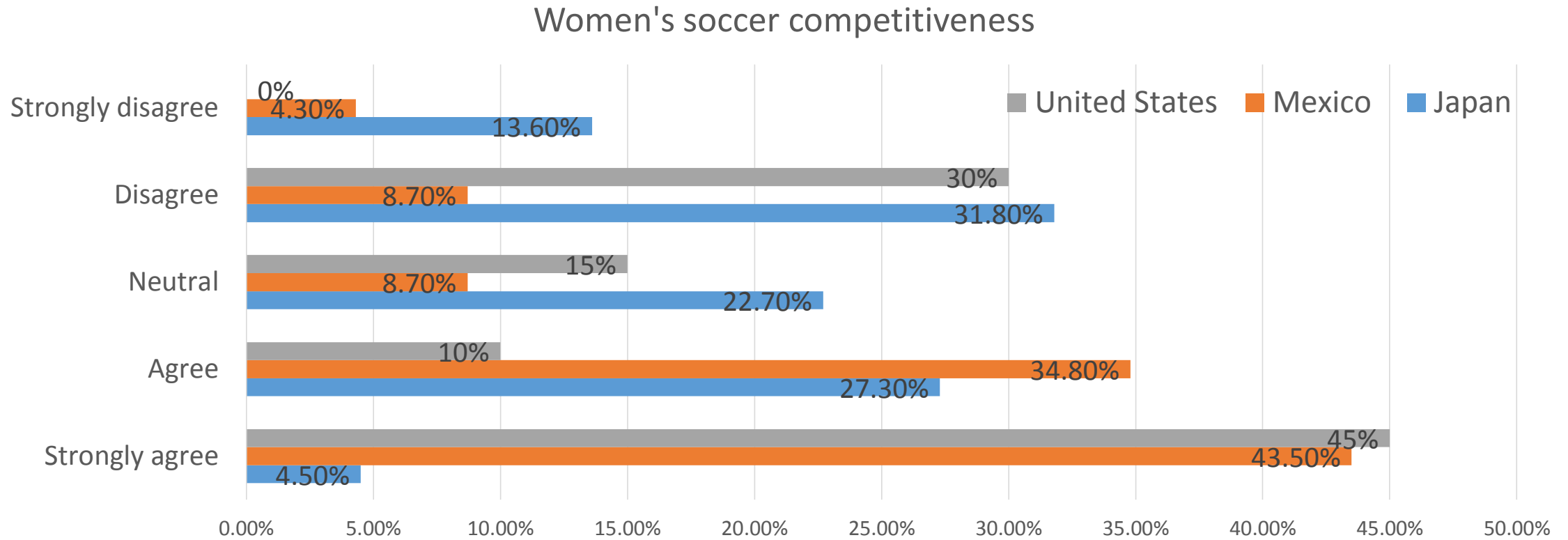
Please explain why you would support one (representative) over the other:

Japan	Mexico	United States
It is my home country	Because it is the national representative	I would support my national team because I am from there. The soccer players represent the ideas of the nation they are defending.
They represent a country named Japan, and they are fighting for us. We should be proud and support them as Japanese.	Because of the love I have for my team	I am an American, so go America.
It is only logical to support them because they are the Japanese representative.	I cheer for them because I am loyal to my country	I am proud of my native country's sports teams and support them unconditionally
Nationalism, that is why I cheer for them	I would always support my national team over any other!	Well I would support one over the other because I was born and raised here meaning I have loyalty towards my team.

Many people used words such as “loyalty,” “nationalism,” and “pride” to answer this question, regardless of their nationality.

Soccer and the role of men and women

"Women's soccer is as competitive as men's soccer"

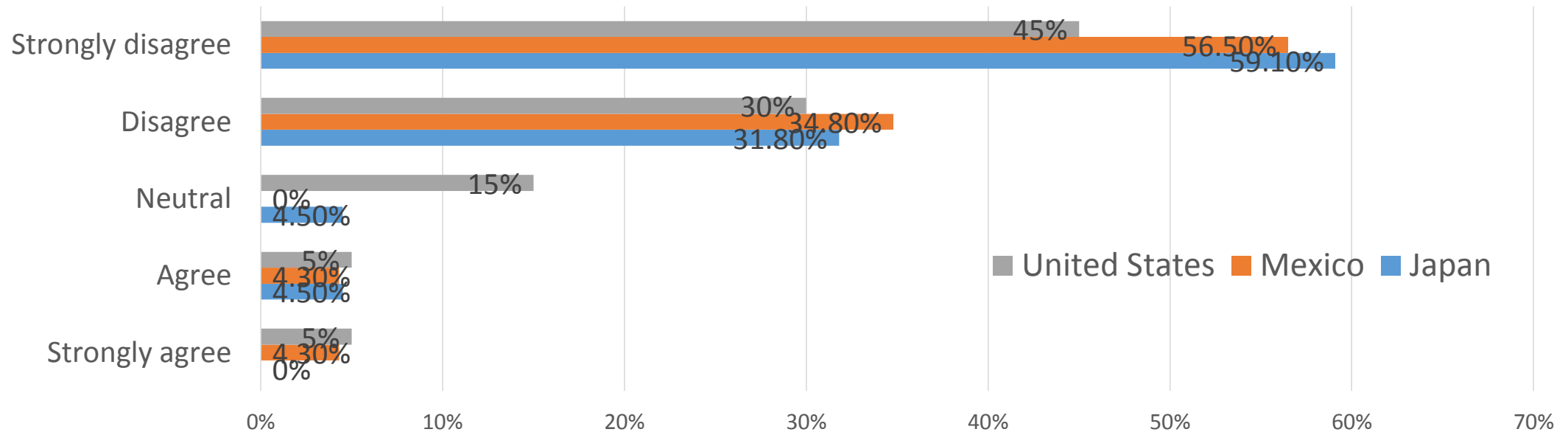


Japanese people seem to think the level of competitiveness shown by female players is still inferior to that of males. Mexican and American people seem to agree women are on a similar level to men.

Soccer and the role of men and women

“Soccer is a sport for men”

A sport for men



Majority of students do not oppose the inclusion of women's soccer

Various issues in society I

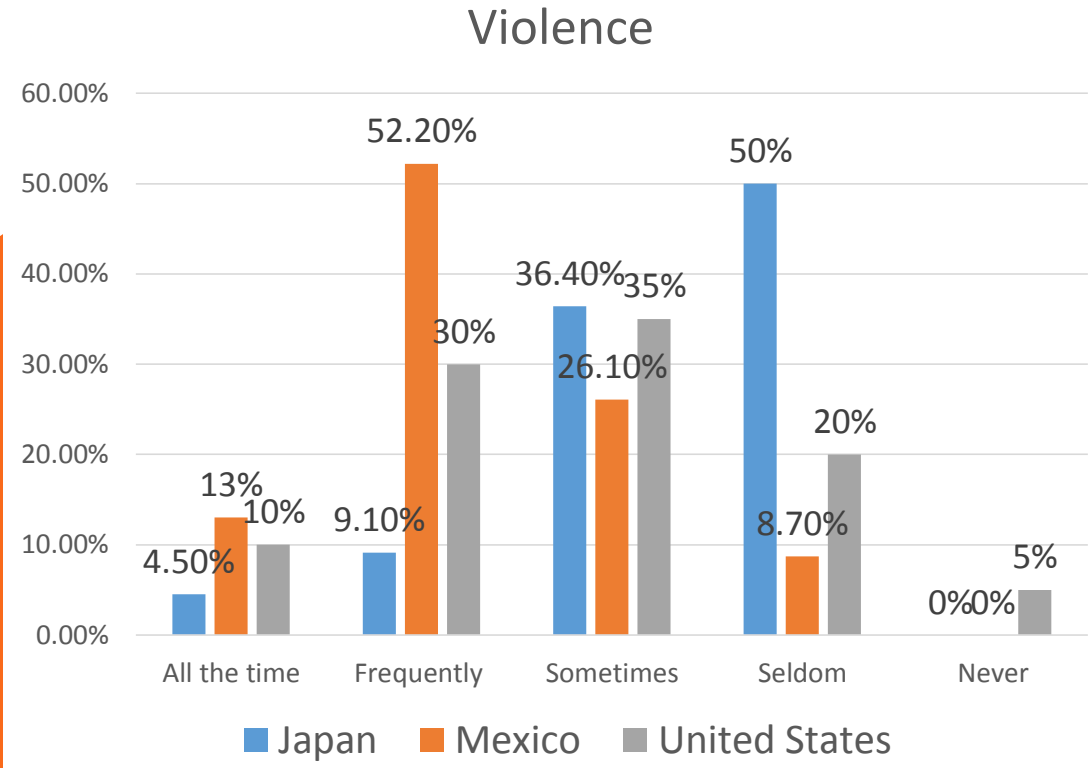
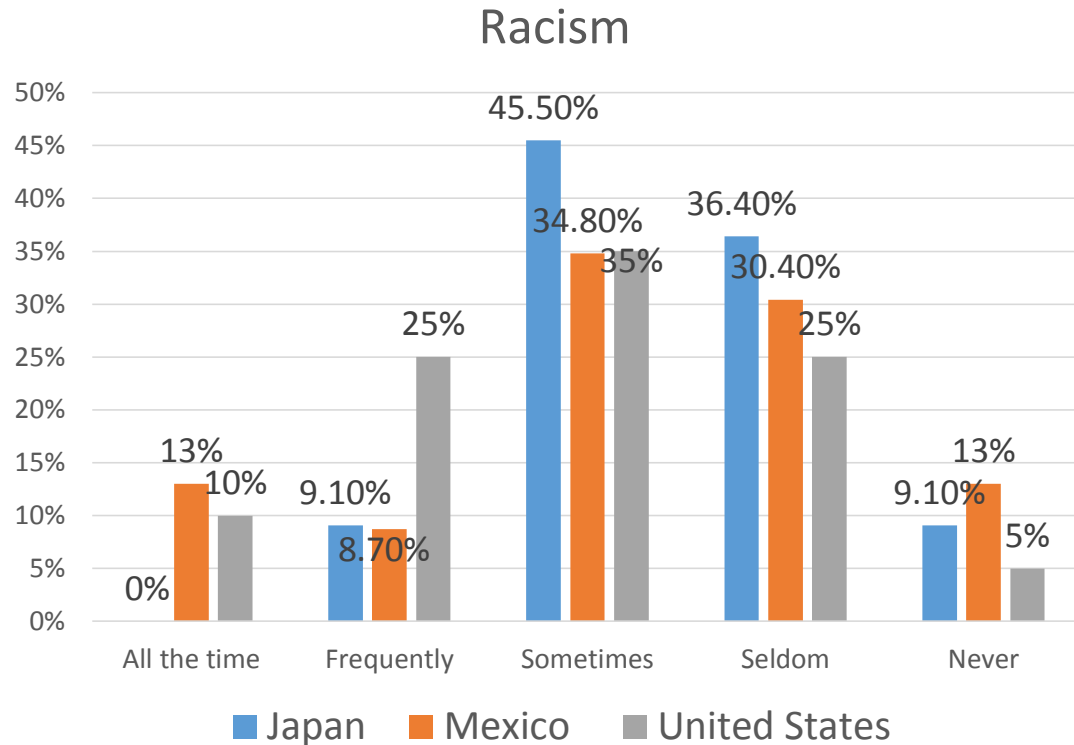
Do you consider the presence of foreign players positive or negative? Why is that?

Japan	Mexico	United States
I think it is positive, because it motivates local players to perform better.	There are many talented boys and girls in my country who don't get to play due to a foreigner taking those spots.	Positive because it diversifies the talent; challenges domestic players to work together.
Positive, both foreign and national players can learn from each other.	Positive since in Mexico we still lack a strong academy system to produce quality players who can perform at a high level.	I consider it a positive thing because they bring new ideas to the team.
It is negative if there are too many foreign players , then the league won't be Japanese anymore.	Negative , it is all business and those foreign players lack real talent.	Negative , in a way that we need more talent in our country
Positive, many foreign players are really handsome and popular with women.	Positive because in the world of soccer there are no boundaries.	I believe is negative because in my country's league there is a large number of great players who don't get to be in the field because of them.

Most Japanese players have a positive attitude toward foreigners, while in America and Mexico participants are divided between those who see foreign influence as positive and those who don't.

Various issues in society II

How frequently are the following issue seen in your country's soccer league?

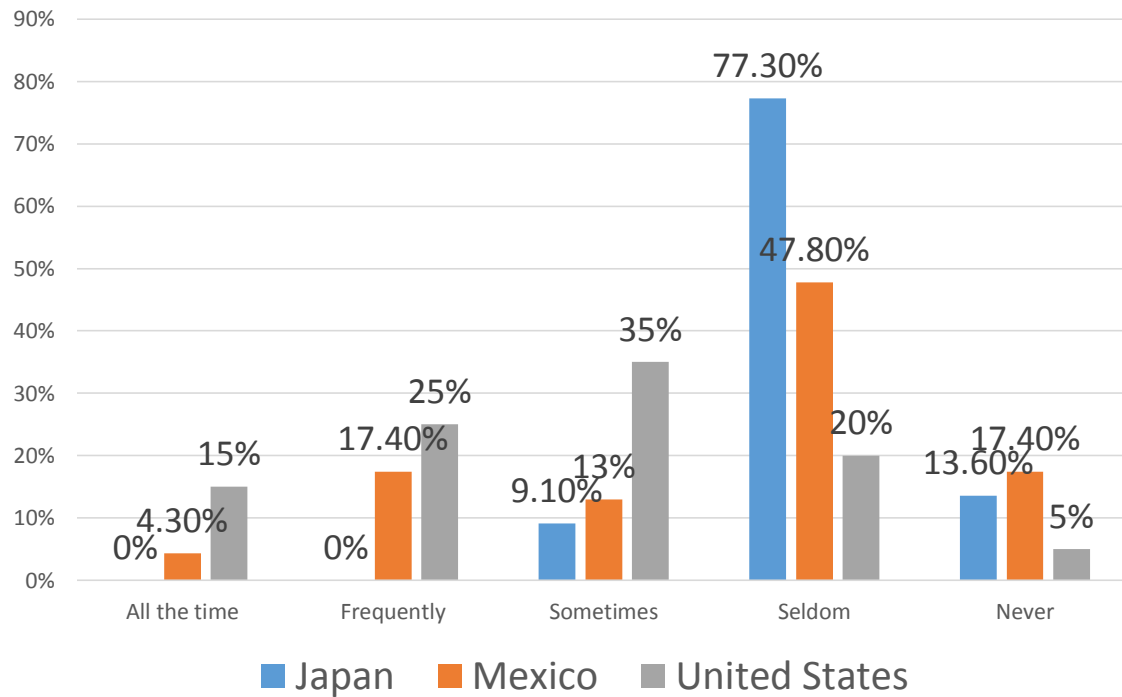


Racism appears to be a bigger issue in America, while violence seems to be more common in Mexico. Japan, however, is not problem-free.

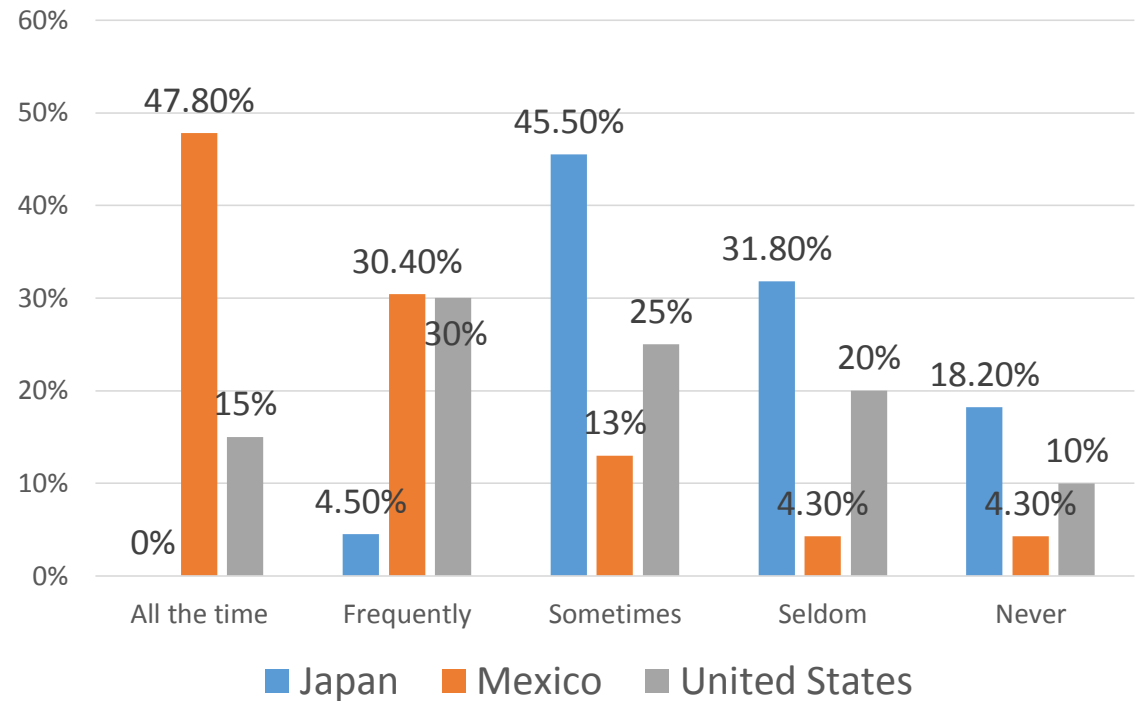
Various issues in society III

Which following problems are they seen in your country's soccer league?

Gender-based discrimination



Gambling



Gender-based discrimination is seen a bit more often in America, while gambling is much more common in Mexico, while they seem to be minor problems in Japan.

Research Question 2: Findings Summary

- **Many participants from all 3 nations follow foreign soccer considering it better than their own domestic league**
 - **However, when it comes to supporting their National team in a competition, they will do it without hesitation due to a deeply-rooted nationalism and pride**
- **Women's soccer is accepted throughout the participants from 3 nations**
 - **Nevertheless, women are still considered to have inferior skills than men by some, especially in Japan**
- **People in Mexico and the United States seem to think foreigners are both positive and negative, while Japanese people think of them as more of a positive influence**
- **Racism, violence, gender-based discrimination and gambling are all present in the sport in all 3 countries**
 - **Japan seems to suffer less from these problems, while Mexico experiences violence in both its stadiums and streets, discrimination permeates the MLS stadiums and society.**

Conclusion

- Through this research some of my hypotheses are challenged, such as the idea that the parental figure in Japan do not have the same influence as it does in Mexico.
- What happens in Mexican society reaches the most popular sport in the nation. A corrupted system that forces people to trust not on their abilities but “connections.” Japan and America do not have that problem.
- I also learned that people do not always use soccer as an outlet to get away from reality, like we do in Mexico due to drug wars and corrupted governments. Japanese participants, at least, did not see soccer that way.
- Issues such as racism, sexism, gambling and others are still remained even in the popular sport.
- “Personal satisfaction” is an idea that the individual in America has ingrained in their minds. “Fair play” reflects what the Japanese society aims to achieve for the most part, a country where good behavior spreads around the nation..

Discussion

Limitations of the study

- All participants were small number of university students, a more thorough research would be necessary to find out what most of the population of each country think.

Future research

- Perhaps inviting people of other ages to participate would offer more variety of results, specially those regarding gender and nationalism.

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