



**Anti-Doping Regulations and the
Significance of Public Opinion:
an Analysis of Public Opinion in Singapore,
Japan and the UK on Issues of Fairness
and Integrity in Sport**



November 2018
(FY2018)

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This research was Commissioned to Loughborough University by the Japan Anti-Doping Agency as part of the “PLAY TRUE 2020, Sport for Tomorrow” project. It is intended to promote social science research for anti-doping activity and the evidence-based education programme.

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Executive summary

- The analysis of the data from Singapore reinforced rather than challenged the conclusions reached in the previous 2017 report on Japanese and UK public opinion on doping and other ethical issues.
- The data indicate more substantial differences in opinion regarding doping between males and females than between ages although opposition to doping tends to increase with age.
- In Singapore, Japan and the UK the most common bases for opposition to doping were the values of sport or the spirit of fair play rather than other possibilities such as potential damage to an athlete's health. Concern with damage to the athlete's health received very low scores in all three countries.
- In assessing the qualities needed by elite athletes respondents in Singapore and the UK tended to identify similar qualities (including 'hard work and determination', 'respect, justice and fair play' and 'respecting rules such as anti-doping'). Japanese respondents identified similar qualities, but gave greater weight to 'mental strength' and 'excellent performance ability'.
- In assessing the qualities needed by elite athletes by gender Singaporean males and females recorded very similar responses although Singaporean females (10%) gave greater weight to 'respect, justice and fair play' than Singaporean males (8.4%), but even here the difference was not substantial. Japanese females tended to give greater weight than Japanese men to affective qualities (including self-analysis, enjoyment, projection of joy, sincerity and confidence) whereas Japanese men tended to give greater weight to the personal (instrumental) qualities required for success (including, strong body, performance ability, competition success, strong personality and decision-making ability). There was a similar pattern among UK males and females but the contrast was not so pronounced.
- There is a high level of consistency in opinion on the ethical issues within the three countries whether compared by gender, age or the level of participation in sport.
- When the data from the three countries were analysed by the extent of participation in sport the most striking observation was the lack of substantial variation in the assessments of fairness of the various actions between those who participated frequently (once or more a week or one to three times a month) and those who rarely if ever took part in sport or sport-related physical activities.

In relation to the ethical issues the results of the analysis of the data were as follows:

'Taking illegal substance as opponent had done the same'

- There was considerable consistency of opinion in all three countries irrespective of the level of participation in sport in terms of athletes finding this unfair..

- There was little difference in the opinions expressed by Japanese males and females with 86.1% and 82.5% respectively considering the action 'unfair'¹. Similarly there was little difference in the opinions expressed by Singaporean males (81.7%) and females (84.2%).
- A wider gap was evident between UK males and females with almost a quarter (23.3%) of UK males considering the action 'fair' by comparison to only 14.9% of UK females.
- While the proportion of Japanese males (86.1%) who considered the action to be 'unfair' was almost 10 percentage points higher than UK males (76.7%) the pattern was reversed for Japanese (82.5%) and UK (85.1%) females with the latter being slightly more inclined to consider the action 'unfair'. The data for Singaporean males and females lay almost exactly midway between the figures for the other two countries.
- With regard to changes in opinion with age the pattern in Japan and the UK both was the same insofar as the proportion of respondents that considered the action 'unfair' increased with age. In Singapore the proportion considering the action 'unfair' was relatively steady across the age groups.

'Taking same PEDS but receiving a longer ban than an athlete in another sport'.

- Singaporean respondents were slightly more likely to refer to their own beliefs and values as the reason for considering this action 'unfair'. However, 'conditions aren't equal between athletes' was the most frequently mentioned reason in all three countries.
- There was little variation in opinion within the three countries when data were analysed by watching sport at a venue or listening to/watching sport on the radio/television.
- A higher proportion of female respondents than male in all three countries considered the action 'unfair' although the differences were not great. Differences by age were modest except among the 15-19 age group where the Japanese cohort was ten percentage points less likely to consider the action 'unfair' than UK respondents and almost 18 percentage points less likely than Singaporean respondents.

'Unable to sleep so take energy drink next morning before competition'.

- In all three countries 'conditions aren't equal between athletes' was the most commonly cited reason for considering the action 'unfair'. However, as with the previous action Singaporean respondents mentioned 'against own beliefs and values' more frequently than UK respondents and slightly more frequently than Japanese respondents.

¹ In order to avoid extensive repetition in the text the terms 'fair' and 'unfair' incorporate the survey responses 'very fair' or 'very unfair'.

- Singapore, UK and Japanese females had broadly similar opinions, but UK males (77.3%) were more likely to assess the action as 'fair' than Japanese males (66.5%) or Singaporean males (66.7%).
- UK respondents were more likely than Singaporean and Japanese respondents to assess the action as 'fair' across the first three age groups. It was only among the 60-79 age group that the proportion considering the action 'fair' was similar across the three countries (between 63.2% and 66.9%).

'Access to latest technology and now winning'.

- Overall opinion is similar with around one-third of the respondents in each country (Singapore 32.2%, Japan 38.9% and UK 35.8%) considering the action 'unfair'.
- In all three countries the extent of participation in sport and physical exercise has little impact on the pattern of responses. Equality of conditions between athletes is the dominant justification for considering the action 'unfair' in all three countries. Singapore tends to follow the pattern of opinion evident in both Japan and the UK although mention of 'against the norms and values of sport' declines with the decrease in sport participation.
- In all three countries the dominant reason is one that is not specific to sport but applicable to a broad range of social/business situations.

'Had laser eye surgery and now winning'.

- There was a strong opinion in all three countries that the action was 'fair' (86.0% in Singapore, 86.8% in Japan and 95% in UK).
- A larger proportion of both UK men and women and UK respondents from all age groups than Singaporean and Japanese respondents considered the action to be 'fair'.
- In both Japan and the UK the proportion assessing the action as 'fair' increased with age, but in Singapore the proportion considering the action 'fair' remained broadly the same across age groups.
- Those that considered the action 'unfair' gave 'conditions aren't equal between athletes' as their main reason.

'Lose preliminary round intentionally to avoid tough opponent'.

- A substantially higher proportion of Japanese respondents (41.6%) than either Singaporean (32.7%) or UK (29.6%) considered this action to be 'fair'.
- The gap was widest among females with 37% of Japanese females considering the action to be 'fair' in contrast with 21.1% of UK females and 26.8% of Singaporean females.
- Males in all three countries were more likely than females to assess this action as 'fair'.
- Singaporean and UK respondents were more likely to refer to 'own beliefs and values' as the reason for their decision than Japanese

respondents. This reason was more common in the UK in response to this issue than in response to most of the previous issues perhaps suggesting a mix of sporting and broader social values informed their assessment.

- Among the Japanese respondents reference to 'disrespecting' the opponent was a more common reason than among Singaporean and UK respondents perhaps indicating the importance of demonstrating respect in Japanese society.
- As with previous issues the extent of participation in sport or whether sport was watched seemed not to impact the source of the assessment about unfairness.

'Intentionally put opponent at a disadvantage'

- The UK respondents are much more likely than either the Singaporean or Japanese respondents to assess this action as 'fair'.
- The highest proportion assessing the action as 'fair' was from UK males (65%)
- Among those who considered the action 'unfair' the most common reason was 'against the norms and ethics of sport' although 'against own beliefs and values' was a prominent reason given by respondents in Singapore and the UK.

Not objecting to a wrong call by a referee that is in your favour

- The pattern of responses in Singapore and the UK was very similar. The larger proportion of respondents referring to one's 'own beliefs and values' might be explained by the ease of transferring the action to other social or work contexts. However, a sport-related reason ('against the norms and ethics of sport') was also frequently mentioned in both countries.

'Make fun of rival during competition'

- Japan and the UK produced very similar set of responses with 69% and 71% respectively considering the action 'unfair'. A higher proportion of respondents in Singapore (80.7%) considered the action 'unfair'.
- Male respondents in all three countries were more likely than female respondents to assess the action as 'fair'.
- The level of involvement in sport (participating, watching or viewing/listening) had little impact on the assessment of the issues.
- Although the prominence varies between Singapore, Japan and the UK all three countries emphasised 'respect' in their assessment. Japanese respondents mention a non-sport/social reason (relationship with others) whereas Singapore and the UK respondents gave greater weight to the sport-related reason - 'respect' for competitors.