

College Student's Perceptions of Contemporary Women's Movements in Japan: Their Objectives and Impact on Society

Capstone Presentation

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Outline

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Significance of Study: Alisha

- In the last couple of years women's movements around the world have begun to gain popularity and notoriety.
- During the Social Issues in Japan class we discussed a variety of women's movements in Japan and what their goals are, such as increasing women's rights and changing sexual assault laws.
- Due to this increase in attention, I want to better understand how these movements are viewed and what their impacts are on the lives of Japanese college students.
- I hope that this project will develop a deeper understanding of women's movements and their cultural significance and start a cross cultural dialogue concerning women's issues.

Significance of Study: John

- I became more aware of the recent women's movements through social media platforms.
- While studying abroad in Japan, I was surprised to hear about Tokyo Medical University lowering the scores of female applicant's entrance exams, favoring male students for admission.
- I became interested in how recent women's movements have affected men's attitudes towards women.
- Through this study I want to find if there has been a positive effect from women's movements on young men's attitudes towards women.

Significance of Study: Annatasha

- Through my studying abroad experiences I realized the inequality of women between Japan and America.
- I learned that certain gender issues exist in Japan such as, women not being able to get hired as easily as men.
- I also learned that the expectations of gender roles in Japan was very different from those in America.
- I would like to find out some of the issues for women living and working in Japan compared to America and hope that this capstone project would inform myself and others to consider the importance of women's movements and women's rights.

Research Questions

- 1.) How do recent women's movements in Japan influence civic engagement by college students?
- 2.) How do college students perceive changes to gender roles in contemporary society and what has influenced these opinions?
- 3.) How have women's movements impacted college students and what behavioral changes may have occurred?

Background Research Outline

- What is a “Women’s Movement?”
- History of Women’s Movements
 - 1868-1990
 - 1990-Present
- Government Approaches
 - Womenomics
 - Women only train cars
- Contemporary Women’s Movements Objectives
 - Street Protests
 - Social Media approach
- Participation in Contemporary Women’s Movements

What is a “Women’s Movement”?

- “Japanese women’s movements represent various ideologies, organizational scales and activity styles”. (Eto, 2005, p. 119)
- Women’s movements are any movement that is solely run by women that have goals that have positive impacts in women’s lives.
- These impacts can be financial, political representation, rights based, etc.

(Eto, 2005; Enloe, 2014)



History of Women in the Meiji Period

- **Meiji Period (1868-1912)**

- 1890's women were prevented from attending political gatherings.
- Women continued to participate in politics through writing articles and petitions.
- One journal, *Bluestockings*, discussed feminist issues.
- 1870's laws criminalized abortions, which lasted throughout this period and was fought by female writers in these journals. (Mackie, 2013)
- Education for both genders were mandated for elementary school, however, there were struggles for college education that did not focus on motherhood.

(Patessio, 2013)



History of Women's Movements Until 1990: Post World War II

- **Post World War II (1945-1990)**
 - Women gained the right to vote (1947) during the U.S. Occupation(1945-1952).
 - Women played a large role in the peace movements.
 - Women's groups worked for cheaper food prices.
 - There was a movement to propel women into the workplace.
 - Most of these movements focused on women's roles as mothers.



(Eto, 2008)

Contemporary Women's Movements

- **Contemporary Movement (1990 - Present)**
 - Fights against dress codes in the workplace.
 - Bring attention to sexual harassment in the workplace and on trains.
 - Petitions for changes to rape and sexual assault laws.
 - Women's effort towards demilitarization.
 - Advocate for World War II Comfort Women reparations.

(Eto, 2008)



Government Approaches: Womenomics

- **Womenomics**

- Under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration, the 2013 policy encouraged more women to work to grow the economy.
- More women are working but in less stable positions.
- Shinzo Abe has one woman in his cabinet.
- Abe encouraging women to have children and work for the country but without support.
 - e.g.: There are few daycare services available for working mothers.



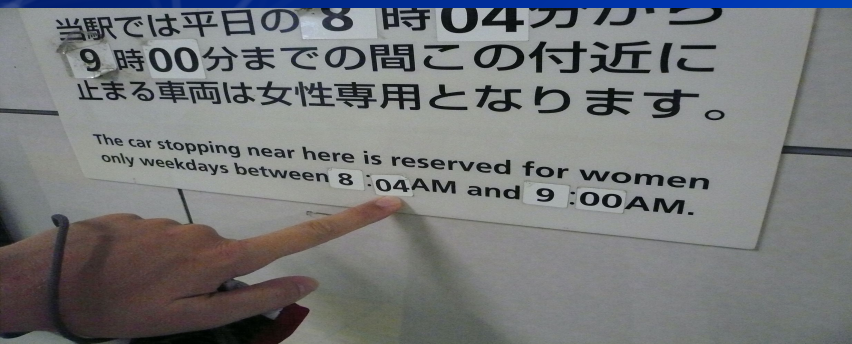
(Schieder, 2017)

Government Approaches: Women Only Train Cars

- **Women Only Train Cars**

- Created to give women and children a safe space on busy trains.
- Trial runs started in 2000 with full implementation starting in 2001.
- First instance was in the early 1900's for school children.
- There are both negative and positive views of these cars.
- These cars are only in effect at certain times.
- From a legal point of view compliance is not required.

(Horii, 2012)



Contemporary Women's Movements: Street Protests

● Tokyo Flower Demonstration

- Demonstration against current laws in Japan surrounding sexual assault and rape. (Flower Demo, 2019)
- Started when a man got acquitted for repeatedly raping his daughter because there was no proof that she had ever verbally or physically resisted. This acquittal was recently overturned.
- Wants better protection for women who experience sexual assault and changes in the procedures for filing charges. (Takiguchi & Ueno, 2019; The Japan Times, 2020)
- The protests have expanded beyond Tokyo. (Flower Demo, 2019)



(The Asahi Shimbun/Jun Ueda, 2019)

Contemporary Women's Movements: Street Protests

- **Women's March**

- Fight for women's rights and gender equality.
- Dealt with bodily autonomy and gender disparities in power positions.
- Fought for more women's involvement in politics.
- Was planned first online by women all over the world.
- Now has marches in most countries on International Women's day.

(Women's March, 2019)



Contemporary Women's Movements: Social Media Approach

- **Kutoo**

- Play on the words *kutsu* for shoe and *kutsuu* for pain.
- Fight against sexist workplace dress codes.
- Trended on social media, used mostly by common women.

(Ishikawa, 2019)

- **Metoo**

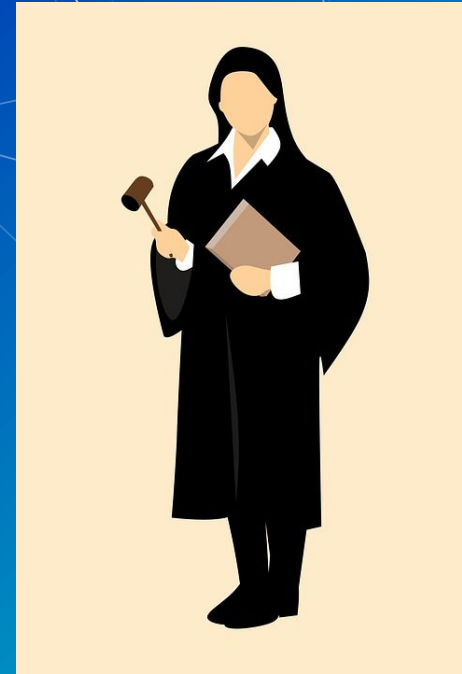
- Fight against sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- Trended on social media, used mostly by famous women.
- Became popularized by regular women too.

(Me Too Movement, 2019)



Contemporary Women's Movements: The Justice System

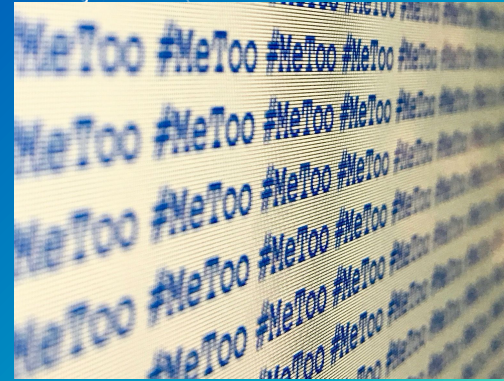
- Japan has 260,400 police officers and of that number, 23,400 are female officers, approximately 9%.
- There are 28,400 police staff and of that number, 13,000 are female, approximately 46%.
- Police staff are not able to take statements.
(National Police Agency, 2018)
- The percentage of female attorneys in 2018 was 19%, and this has continued to decrease over the last 5 years.
- This percentage is less for judges and prosecutors.
(Japan Federation of Bar Associations, 2018)



Contemporary Women's Movements: #MeToo

- **MeToo movement in Japan**

- Shiori Ito is a journalist who was allegedly raped by well known broadcast journalist Noriyuki Yamaguchi.
- Tried to file a police report and was discouraged.
- Charges were dropped despite her trying to pursue them.
- When she went to the media she faced extreme backlash.
- Started the MeToo movement in Japan as a way to bring attention to Japan's sexual assault laws and practices.

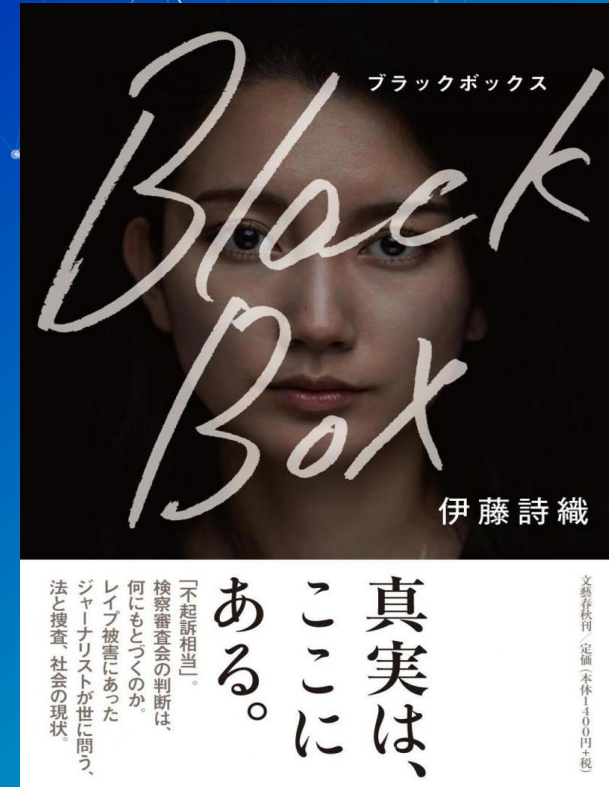


Contemporary Women's Movements: Shiori Ito

- *Black Box*

- Shiori Ito's book; personal account of how she was treated and the struggles that she faced.
- Testimony of the way the law can prevent women from speaking out.
- She discusses her inability to report to a female police officer.
- Mentions that the process of reporting the crime was humiliating.

(Ito, 2017)



Participation in Contemporary Women's Movements

- The first **Tokyo Flower Demonstration** had about 300 men and women who spontaneously started demonstrating. (Takiguchi & Ueno, 2019)
- The first **Women's March** in Japan had around 450 people march through popular locations in Tokyo. (Goto, 2019)
- Both movements show international and national attention being paid to women's issues. (Flower Demo, 2019)



MARCH
WOMEN'S DAY

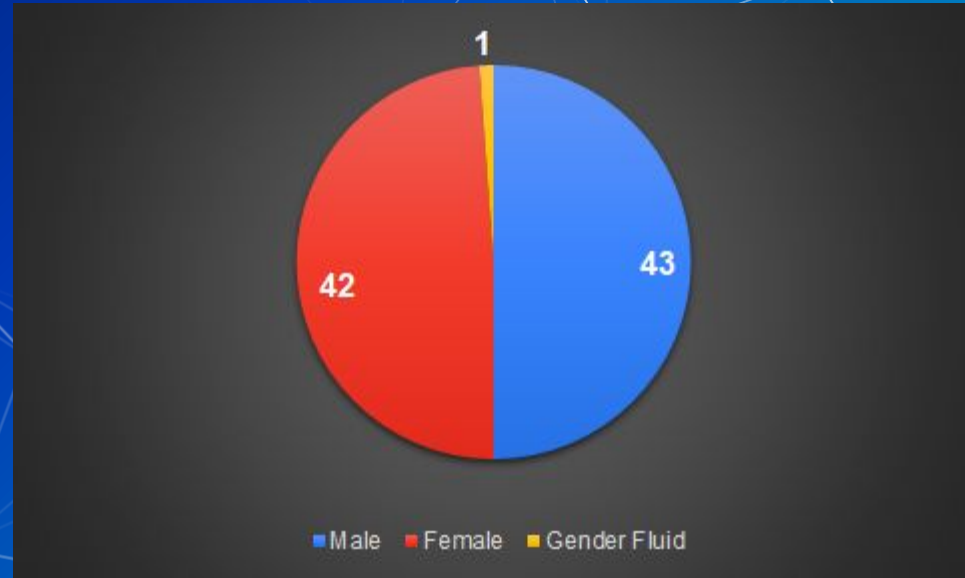
Research Method

Research Participants:

- 86 Japanese college students
 - 43 male
 - 42 female
 - 1 gender fluid

Data Collection Instruments:

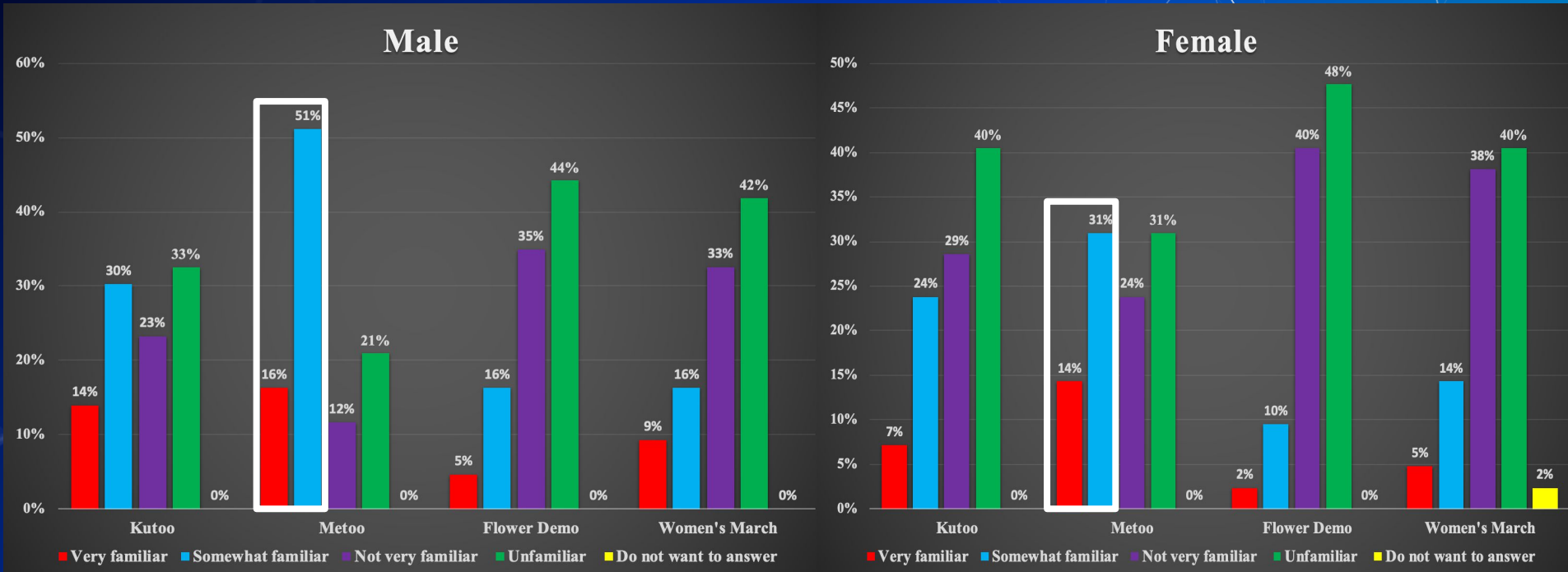
- Online survey, Google form
 - [Japanese survey](#)
 - [English survey](#)



Research Findings 1:

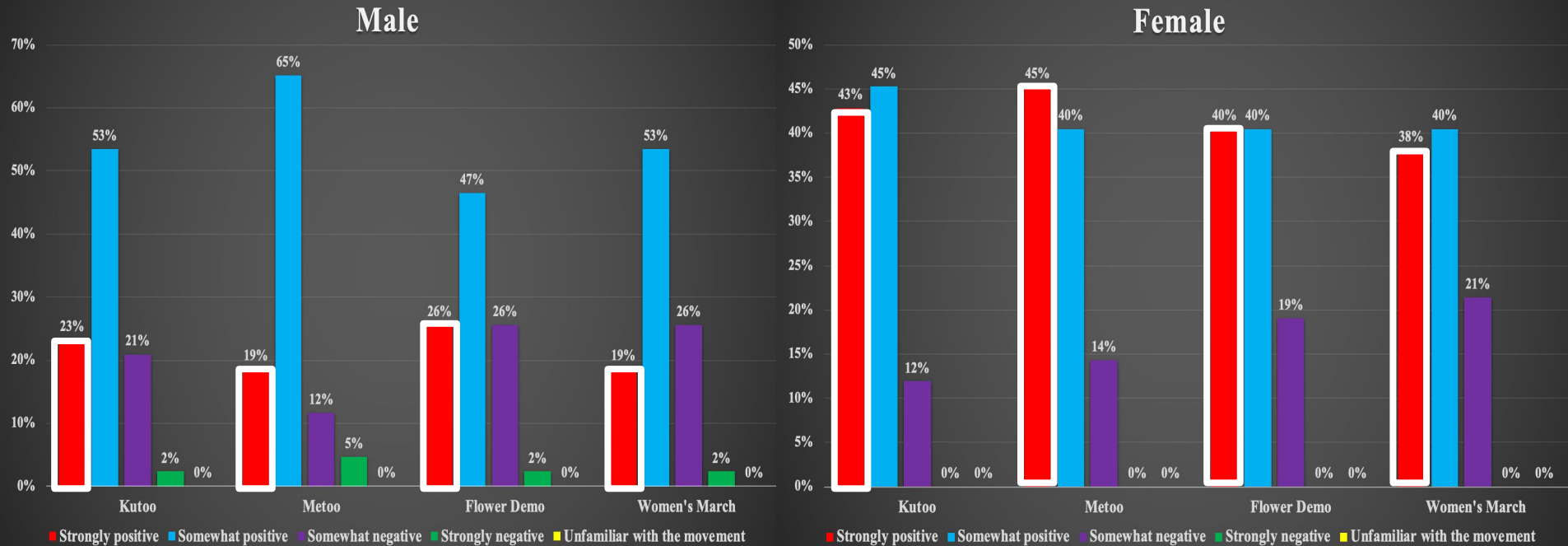
Research question 1: How do women's movements in Japan influence civic engagement by college students?

1-1: How familiar are you with the following women's movements?



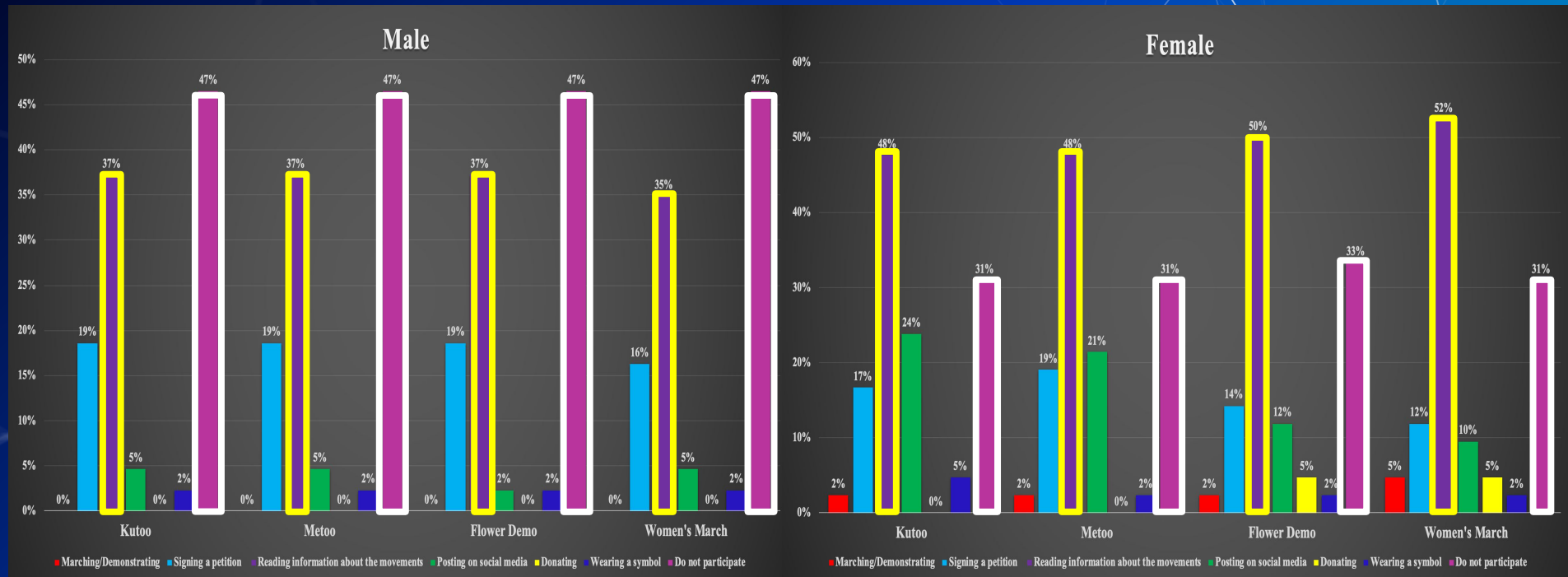
67% of male and 45% of female students were familiar with Metoo. The Kutoo, Flower Demo, and Women's March were **unfamiliar** to respondents.

1-2: How do you feel about the following women's movements?



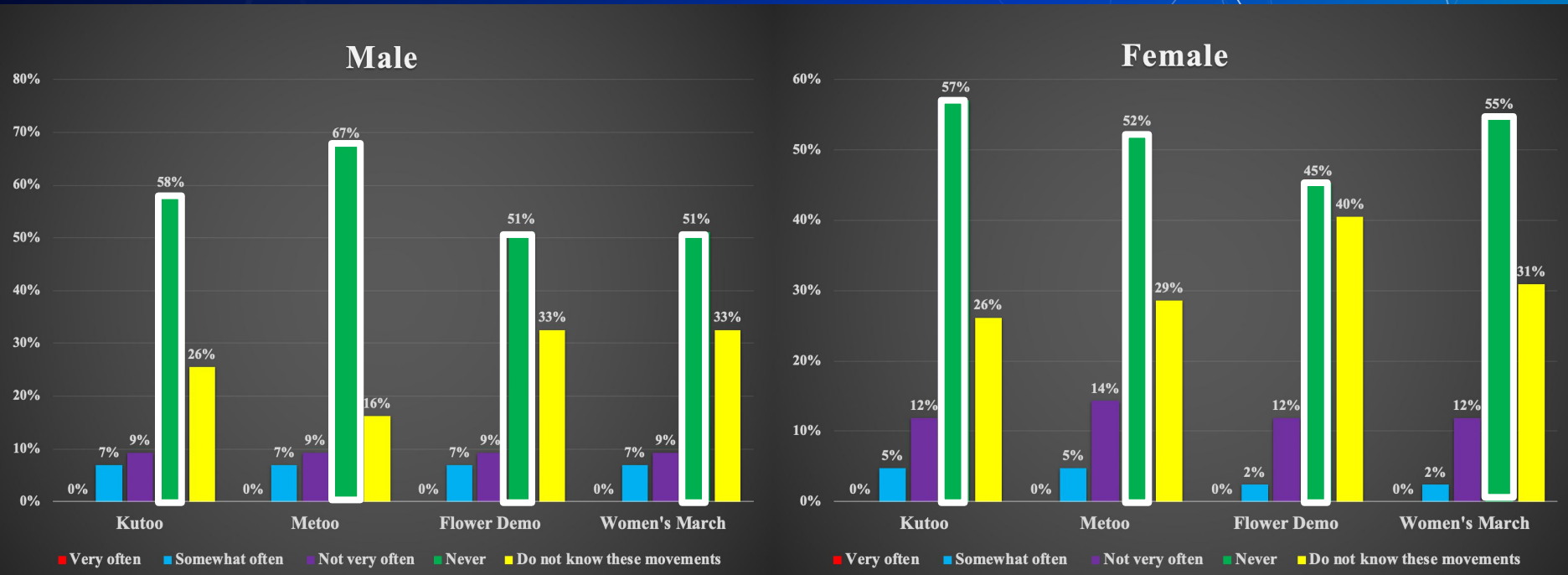
Approximately **40%** of female and **20%** of male students had **strongly positive** feelings towards women's movements.

1-3: How do you participate in the following women's movements?



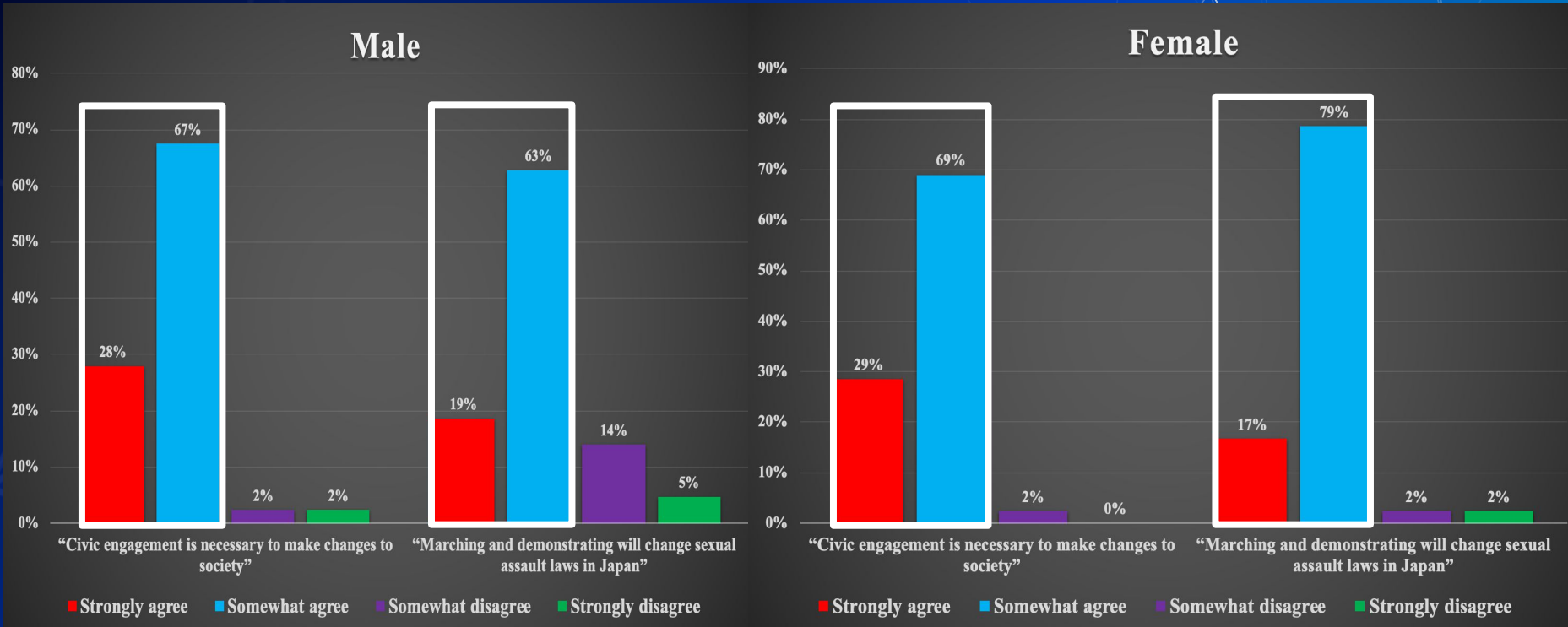
Roughly **47%** of male and **31%** of female students **do not participate** and **37%** of male and **48%** of female students **read information only**.

1-4: How often do you participate in the following women's movements?



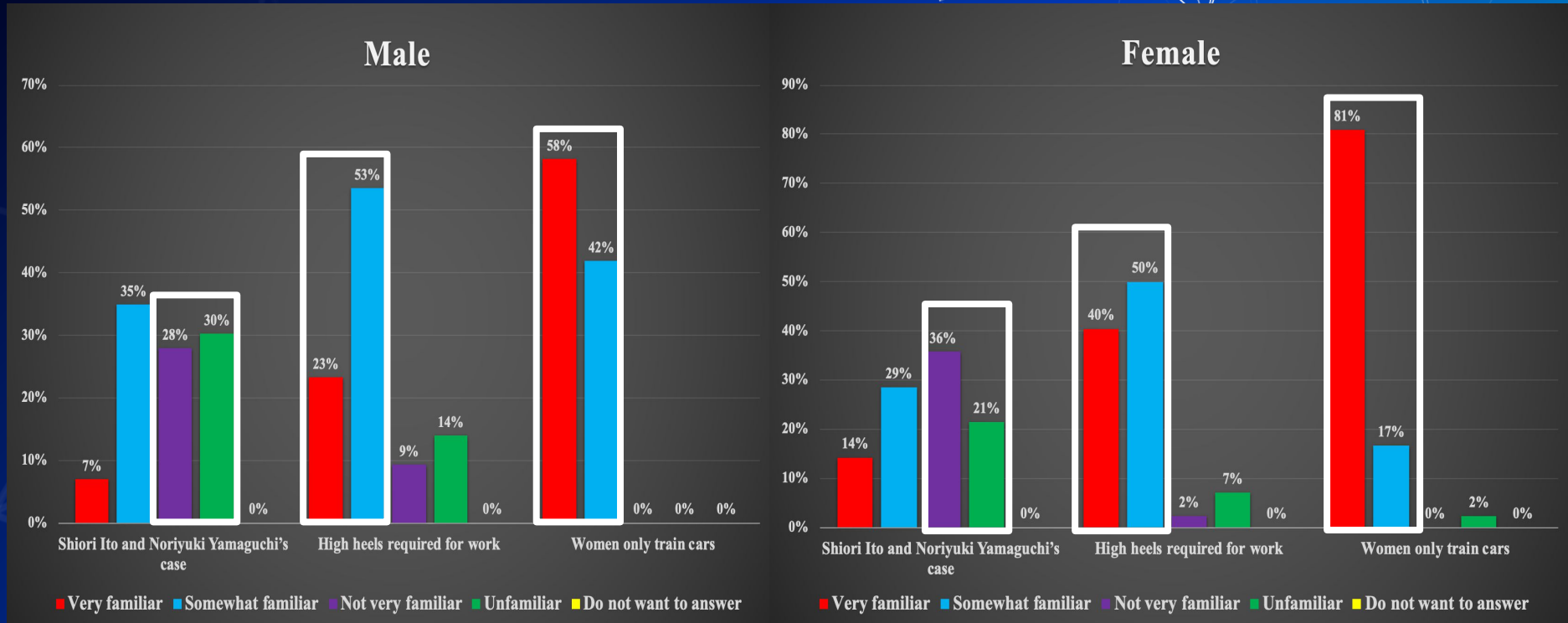
The majority of female and male students feel that they do not participate in the Kutoo, Metoo, Flower Demo, and the Women's March.

1-5: Opinions regarding civic engagement.



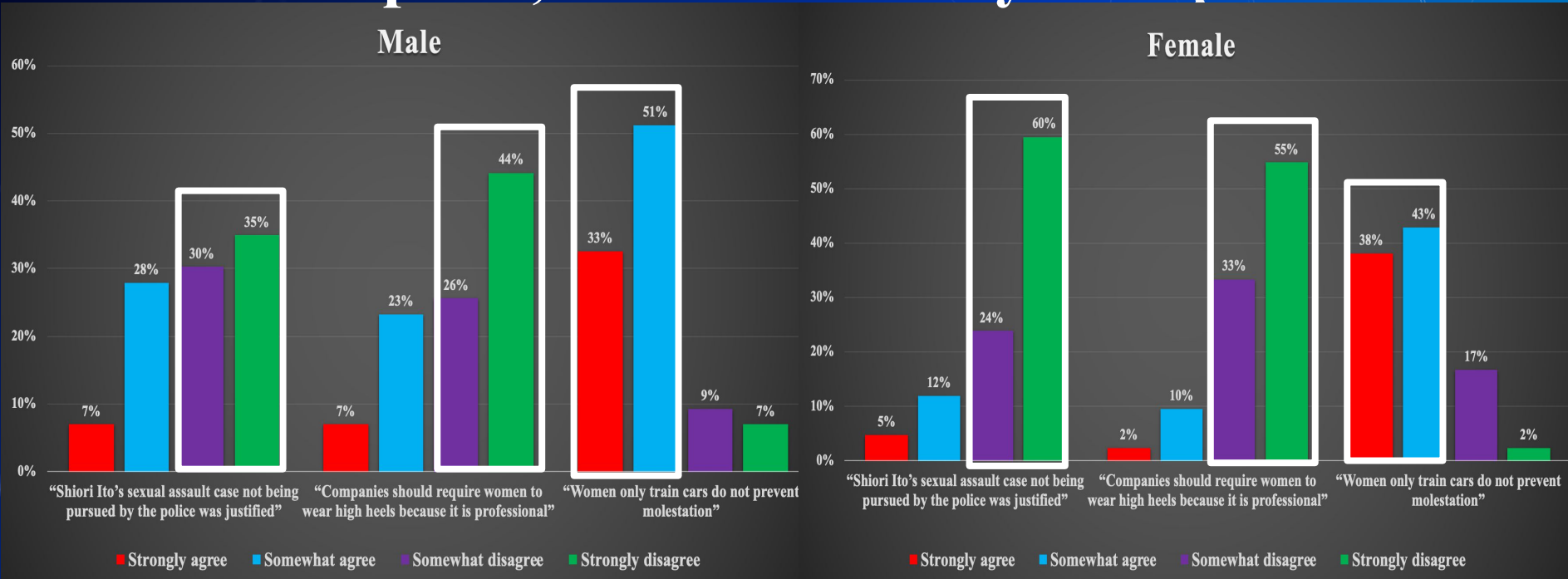
Approximately **90%** of female and male students **agree** that civic engagement is necessary to make changes to society.

1-6: How familiar are you with the following cases?



The **majority** of students were **unfamiliar** with Shiori Ito's rape case but almost **all** were **familiar** with women only train cars. **76%** of males and **90%** of females were **familiar** with high heeled dress code.

1-7: Opinions regarding Shiori Ito, high heels in the workplace, and women only train cars.



65% of male and **84%** of female students **disagree** with Shiori Ito's rape not being prosecuted, **70%** of male and **88%** of females **disagree** with high heeled dress code. Roughly **80%** agree that women only train cars prevent molestation.

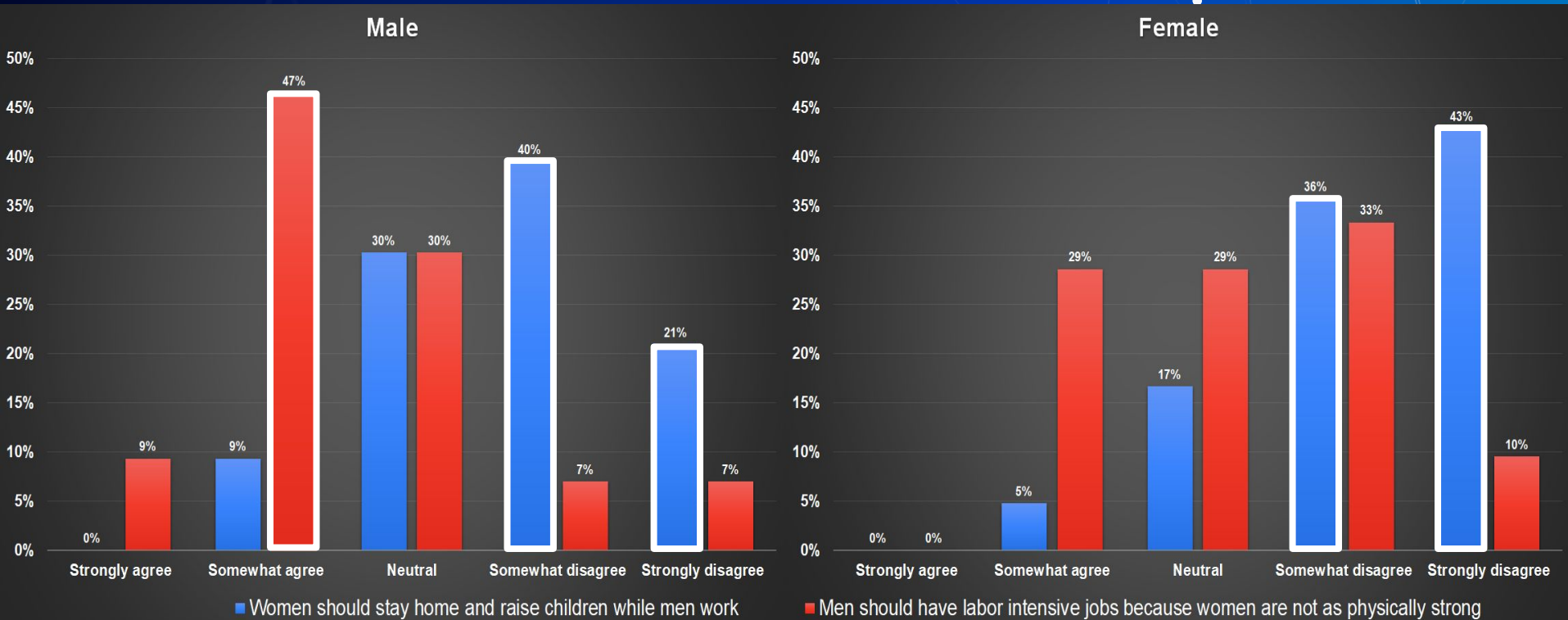
Research Question 1: Summary of Findings

- More male than female students were familiar with women's movements, though, female students had more strongly positive feelings about the movements.
- The familiarity with the movements and their goals seems to be based on social media presence.
- Despite almost all of the students feeling that civic engagement is necessary for social change the majority of students do not physically participate in women's movements but awareness and a desire to acquire knowledge are increasing.

Research Findings 2:

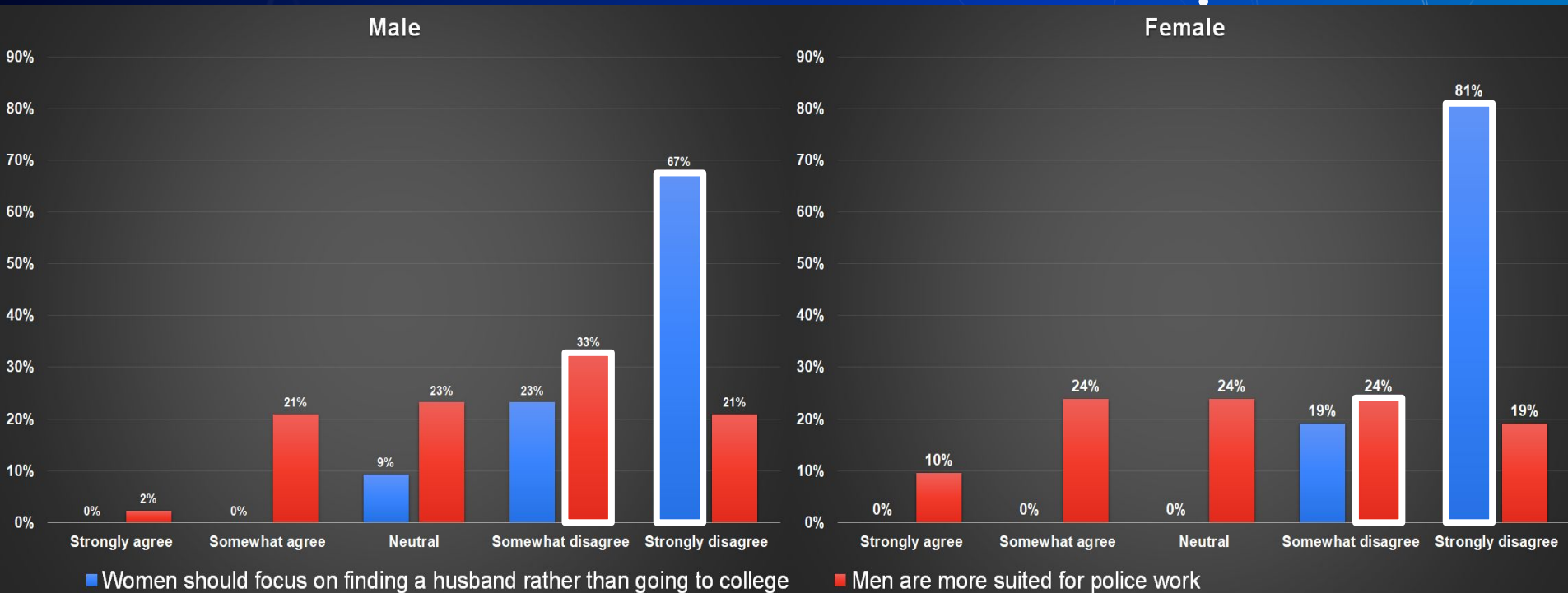
Research question 2: How do college students perceive changes to gender roles in contemporary society and what has influenced these opinions?

2-1: Opinions regarding women's place in the home and men's place in the workforce.



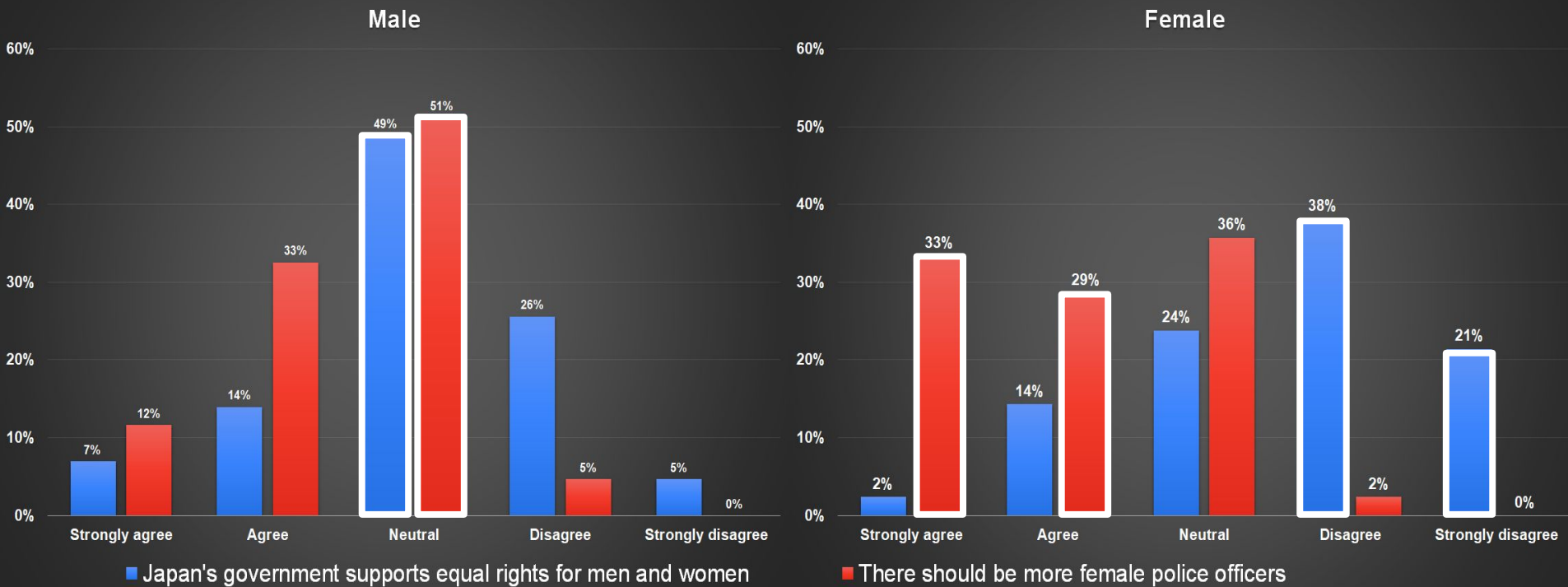
Majority of males and females disagree with raising children and staying home as women's only roles but more men agree that men should have labor intensive jobs.

2-2: Opinions regarding women in college and men in law enforcement.



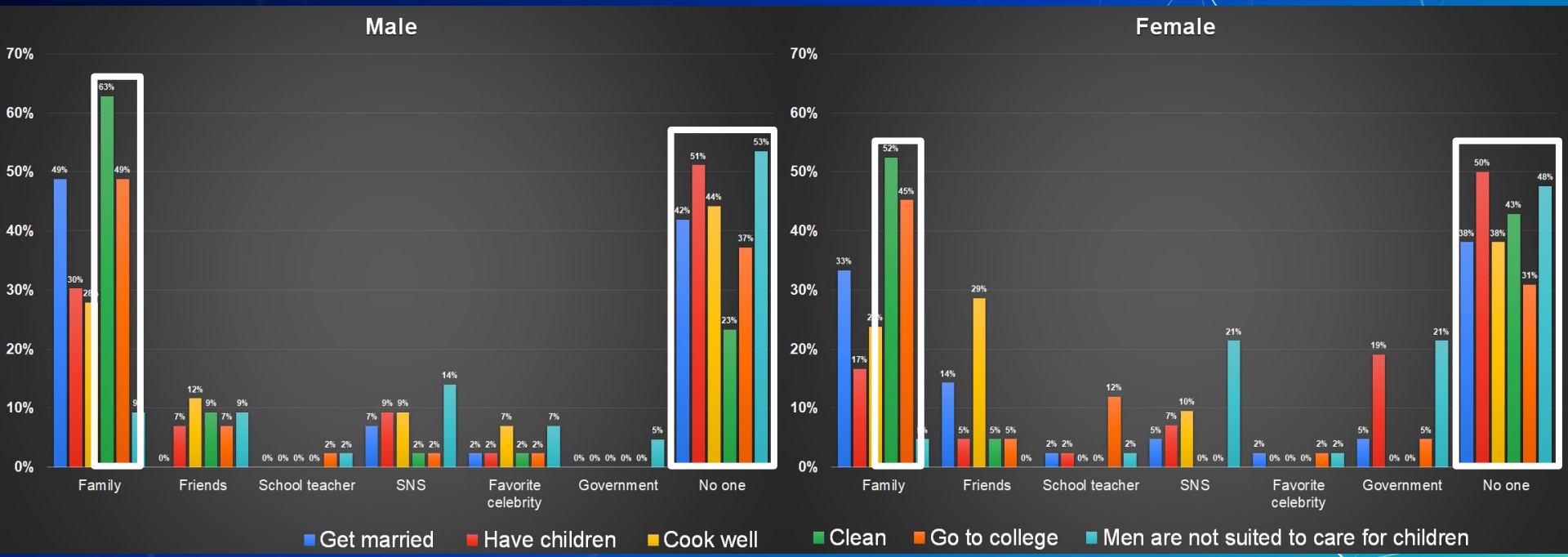
The majority of males and females strongly disagree with women finding a husband rather than going to college. More males than females disagree that men are more suited for police work.

2-3: Opinions regarding Japan's government and women in law enforcement.



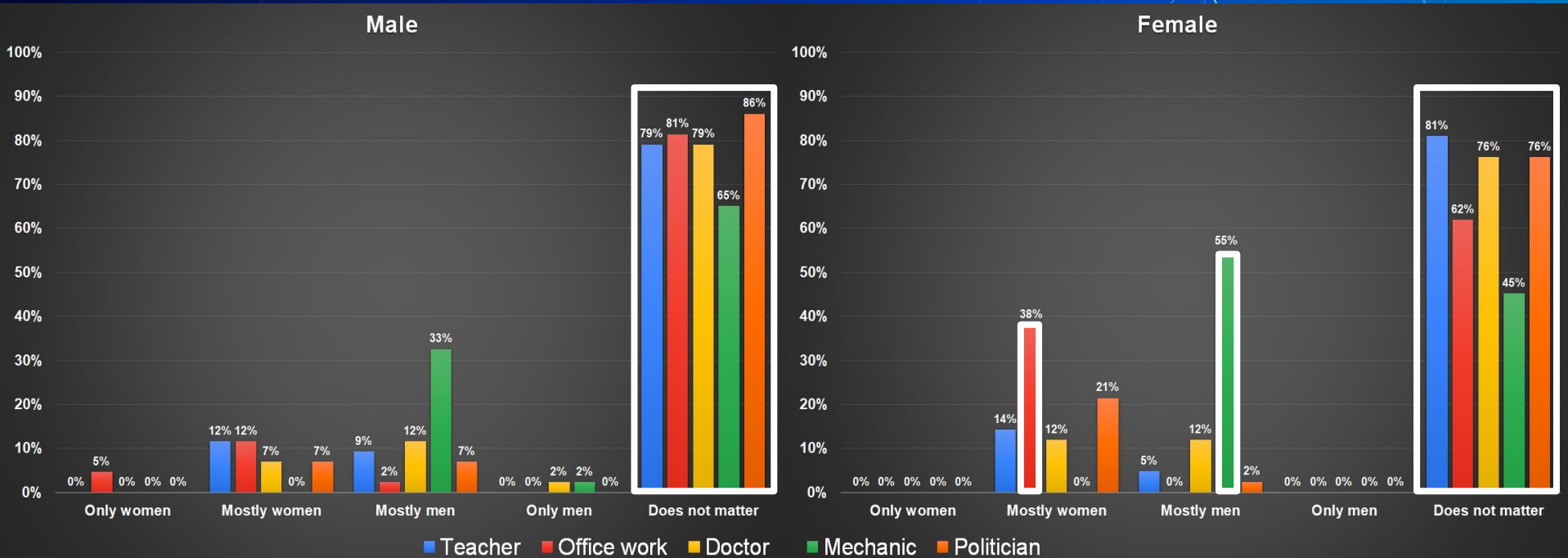
Males feel neutral about whether Japan's government supports women's rights while women disagree. A majority of females agree that there should be more female police officers while a majority of men feel neutral towards it.

2-4: Who pressures you the MOST to meet the following gendered ideals?



Majority of students said they are not pressured by anyone, but those who were pressured on keeping a clean household and going to college were influenced by family.

2-5: Which gender do you believe are best suited for the following occupations?



Both men and women agree that gender does not matter with the types of occupation but more women agree that manual labor is more suited for men and office work for women.

Research Question 2: Summary of Findings

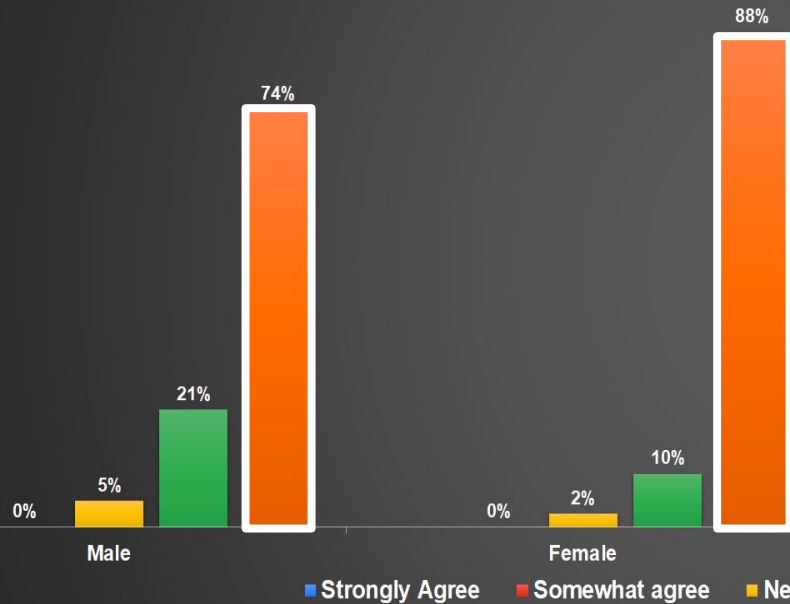
- The majority of males and females seem to not carry typical gender stereotype roles, however, females are more biased towards certain occupations such as office work and manual labor.
- Men and women both agree women deserve equal opportunities.
- The majority of male and female student reported that they felt they were not pressured to meet gendered ideals by anyone so the gender stereotypes the students expressed seemed to be formed by their own experiences.

Research Findings 3

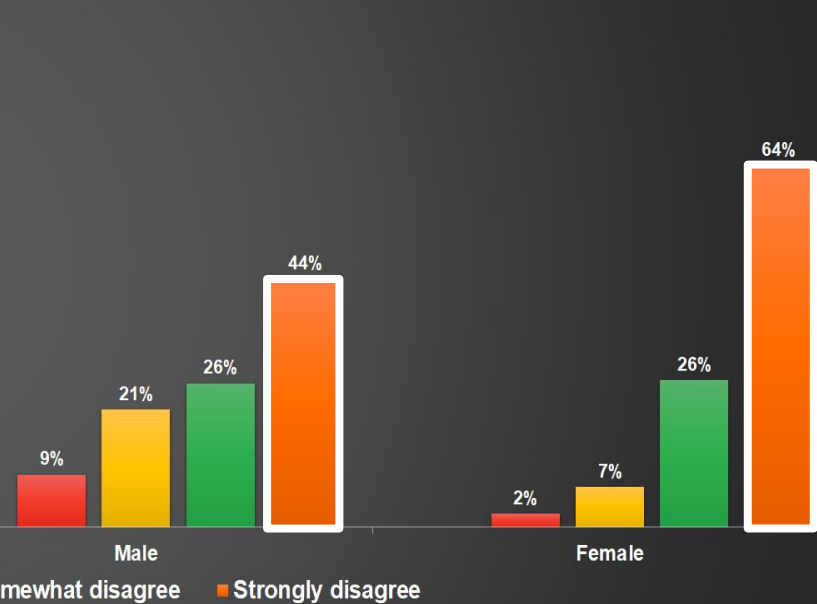
Research question 3: How have women's movements impacted college students and what behavioral changes may have occurred?

3-1: Do you agree or disagree with the following examples of gendered dress codes?

Women shouldn't wear glasses while working

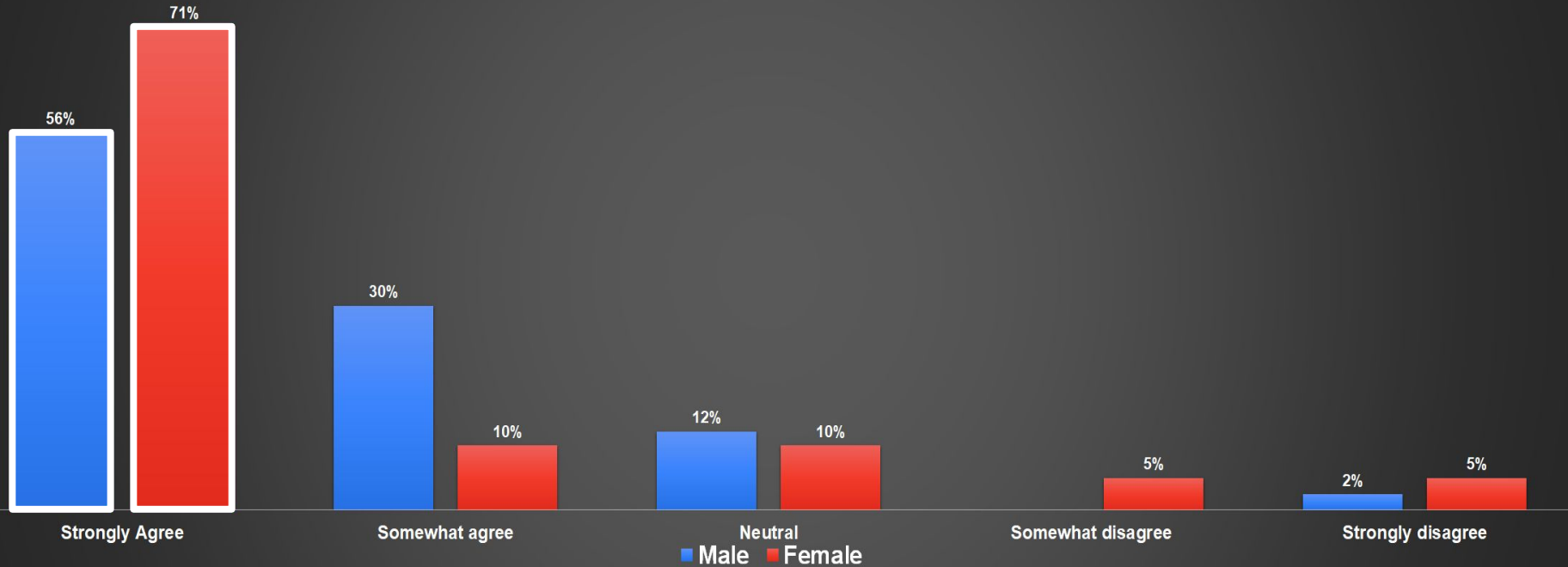


Men must wear suits in the workplace



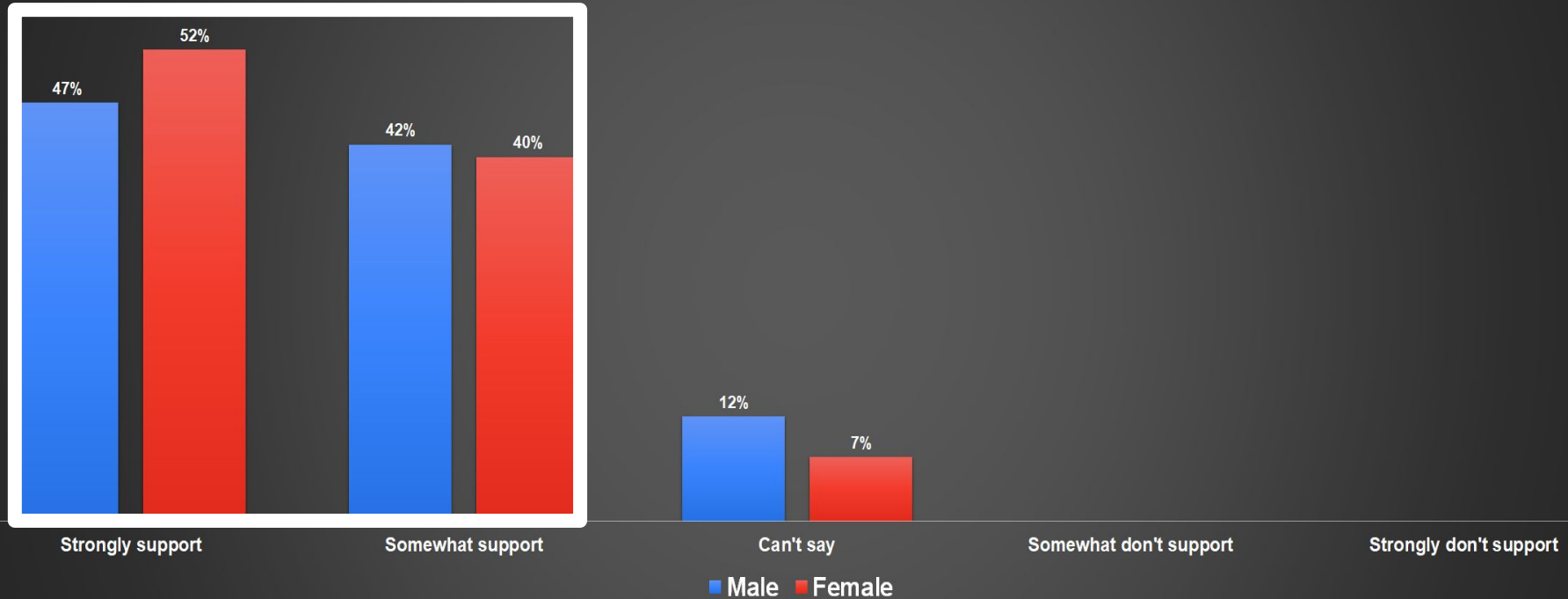
Almost all students **disagree** with women not being allowed to wear glasses at work, but about **10%** of male students believed that men **should** wear suits in the workplace.

3-2: Do you agree or disagree with companies getting rid of gendered dress codes?



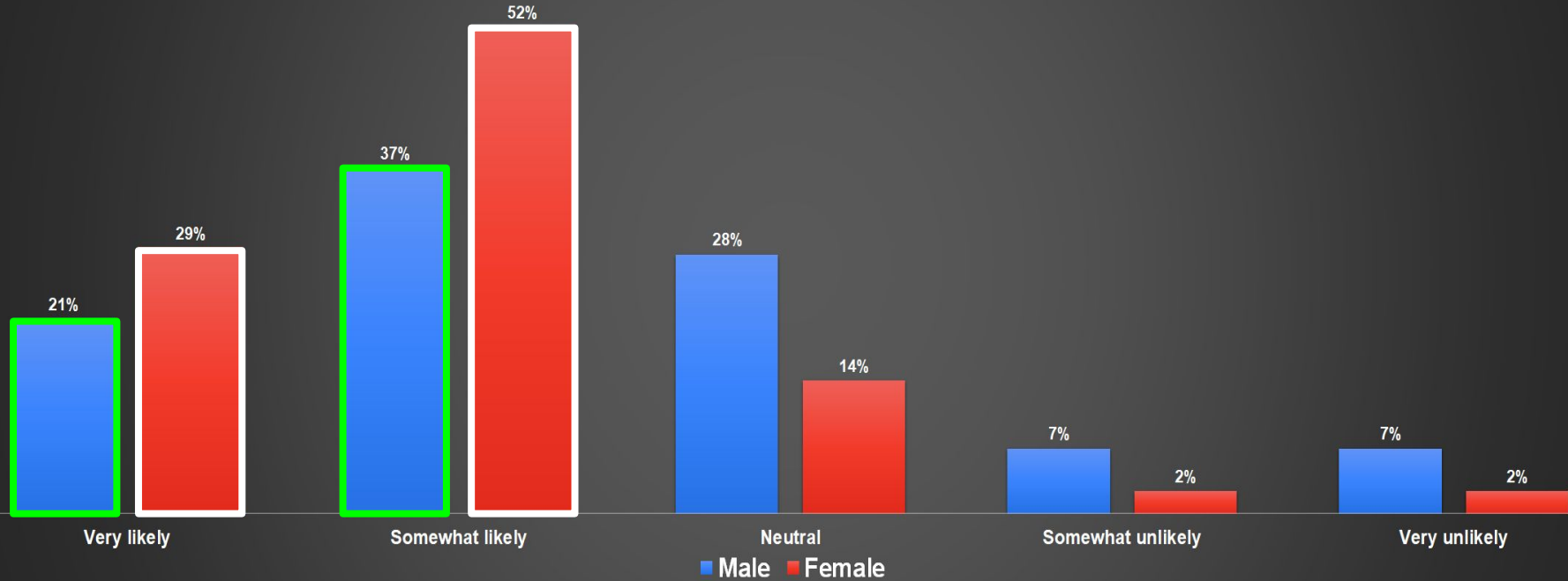
86% of male and **81%** of female students agree that companies **should** get rid of gendered dress codes.

3-3: How likely are you to support a person who came forward about having been sexually assaulted?



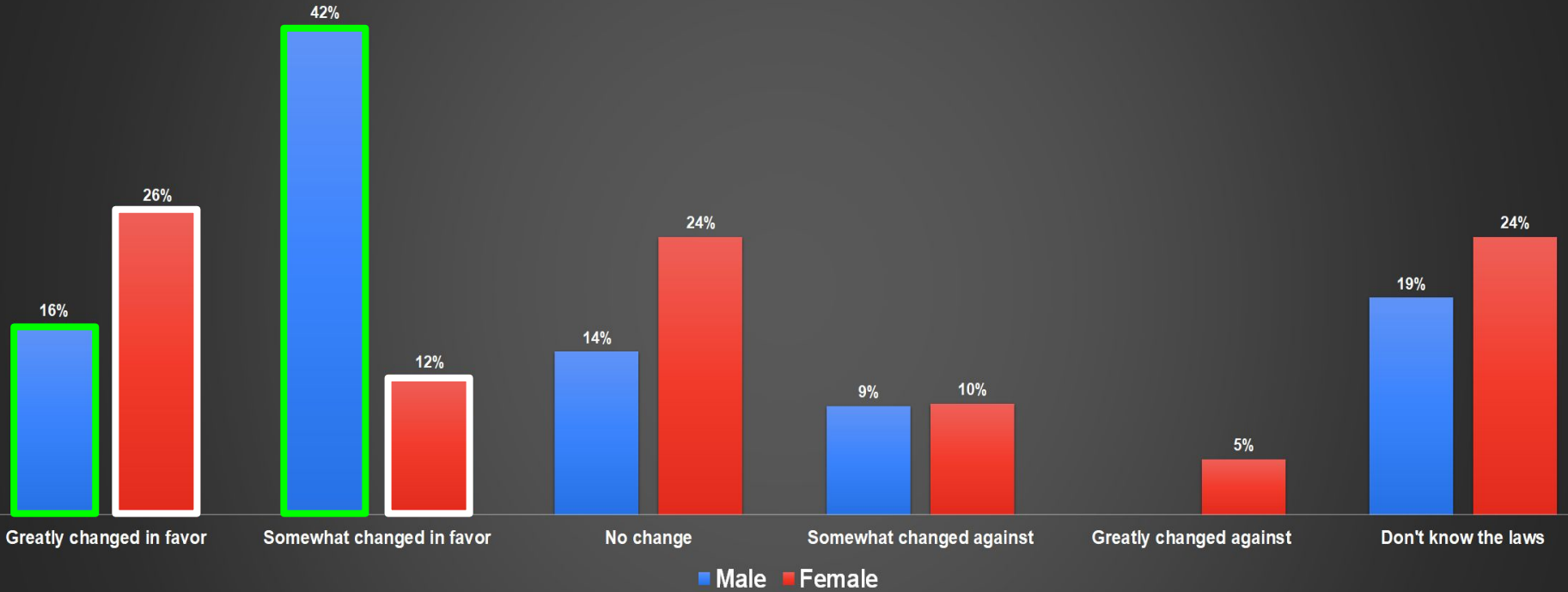
Almost all students said they **would support** someone that has come forward about being sexually assaulted and **no one** said that they **would not**.

3-4: Are you more likely to follow news about women's movements now that they are becoming more public?



58% of male students said they **would** be more likely to follow the news while **81%** of female students said they would follow the news about women's movements.

3-5: Has your opinion of Japan's laws regarding sexual assault changed to support women's rights because of the Metoo movement and the Flower Demonstration?



58% of male and **38%** of female students said their opinion has changed in favor of supporting women's rights because of the recent movements.

Research Question 3: Summary of Findings

- Most male and female Japanese students were against gendered dress codes and feel that companies should eliminate them.
- Because of the growing popularity of women's movements in Japan, students have become more likely to follow them.
- Most students are supportive of those that come forward about having been sexually assaulted, but about 25% of students are not aware of the sexual assault laws of Japan.
- Men's opinions have changed positively in favor of supporting women's rights because of recent women's movements.

Conclusion

- Japanese male college students may be more familiar with the movements because shifting gender roles has caused them to seek information regarding these movements and their impacts.
- Female college students' experiences influence their strong support of women's movements and their objectives even though they do not participate in them or know much about the movements.
- While some students still hold gendered ideals, there is also a large number of students who do not support gendered labor or dress codes and do not feel that anyone influences their own opinions. Students' gender stereotypes appear to be formed through personal experience and exposure to information on SNS.
- The women's movements being in the news and SNS have played an important role in Japanese college students' desire to learn more about the movement's goals and to be supportive of the changes being made.
- Japanese women's movements are increasingly important in the lives of college students and have strongly changed men's awareness of women's rights issues.

Limitations of the Study and Future Study

- Due to the limited amount of knowledge that the surveyed students had about women's movements, getting a full picture of their views was difficult.
- The information regarding gender ideals was only on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree but we did not ask why they agreed or disagreed which may have provided more insight into how these ideals are perpetuated.
- Due to the Coronavirus pandemic we may have had fewer respondents.
- In the future, we would like to explore their employment history and its correlations with gender bias in the workplace.

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