

Survey on Professional Baseball

Corporate Communications Department
Nomura Research Institute, Ltd.

December 22, 2004

Purpose of Survey

Japanese professional baseball has been rocked severely during the past several months by a debate on a shift to a one-league system, the first-ever strike, the establishment of a new team, mergers and acquisitions of teams and scandals by owner companies. The survey asked the public how they conceived this series of events and what kind of reform they desired.

NRI Net Research aimed to quantitatively identify the actual situation regarding professional baseball in Japan, focusing on how respondents watch various professional sports, and trends in interest during the past year.

Outline of Survey

■ Implementation of survey

Date of survey: November 25 – 28, 2004

Survey method: Internet questionnaire survey (infoQ)

Survey target: infoQ monitors

■ Attributes of Respondents

Gender

	No. of respondents	%
Male	591	50.1
Female	589	49.9
Total	1180	100.0

Age

	No. of respondents	%
19 or under	135	11.4
20 – 24	77	6.5
25 – 29	156	13.2
30 – 34	132	11.2
35 – 39	84	7.1
40 – 44	141	11.9
45 – 49	73	6.2
50 – 54	160	13.6
55 – 59	84	7.1
60 or over	138	11.7
Total	1180	100.0

Marital status

	No. of respondents	%
Not married	470	39.8
Married	710	60.2
Total	1180	100.0

Region

	No. of respondents	%
Hokkaido	60	5.1
Tohoku	49	4.2
Hokuriku/Shinetsu	38	3.2
Kanto	527	44.7
Tokai	121	10.3
Kinki	228	19.3
Chugoku	54	4.6
Shikoku	30	2.5
Kyushu/Okinawa	73	6.2
Total	1180	100.0

Occupation

	No. of respondents	%
Company employee	369	31.3
Student	166	14.1
Housewife	274	23.2
Self-employed	94	8.0
Public service employee	36	3.1
Doctor/medical personnel	23	1.9
Company director	12	1.0
Company owner	8	0.7
Teacher	10	0.8
Lawyer/accountant	1	0.1
Agriculture/forestry/fisheries	4	0.3
Part-time worker	54	4.6
Unemployed	75	6.4
Other	54	4.6
Total	1180	100.0

Outline of Survey (Supplement)

- This questionnaire survey was conducted by utilizing infoQ, a questionnaire service that uses the Internet. It should be noted, therefore, that the people targeted by the survey frequently use the Internet and have a relatively high degree of Internet literacy.

<https://infoq.jp/>



Summary of Survey Results

- With regard to changes in interest level regarding Japanese professional baseball during the past year, those responding “interest increased” and “interest the same” combined to total 52.8%; while those who responded “interest decreased” accounted for 27.8%. People who responded that next season they “will watch fewer games than this season” stood at 9.5% of the total. The main reasons stated were “the game has become no fun” (55.4%), “interest dampened by scandals and reorganization fuss”(46.4%), and “interest in the US Major League baseball heightened” (27.7%). Although the figures are small in comparison to the total, a move away from baseball support can clearly be seen.
- Looking at responses by region, in Tohoku, which hosts Rakuten’s first and second string teams, which will debut in the Pacific League next season, respondents who chose “will watch more games than this season” stood at 38.8%; the highest in regional terms, and no one responded “will watch fewer games than this season.” Incidentally, including respondents who do not reside geographically close to any baseball team home area, it is apparent that more than half of respondents have specific favorite teams. This rate is approximately twice the number of respondents who have specific favorite soccer J. League teams. This shows that support for specific teams underpins the popularity of professional baseball.

Summary of Survey Results (Continued)

- When asked about the frequency with which they watch professional sports games, “actively watch” was the highest for the matches of Japan’s national soccer team, with 30.6%. This also took the highest percentage when analyzed by age group. Together with the response “would watch if I had time,” only Japanese professional baseball and the Japan national soccer team’s games recorded a majority, and professional baseball still can be said to be the favorite sport of Japanese people.
- The sports in which the ratio of people whose interest level grew during the past year was highest for the US Major League baseball, standing at 33.8%. Particularly, those responding “have interest” in games and teams in which Japanese players are involved reached 60.9%. It is thus clear that in both baseball and soccer, interest in Japanese players active on the global stage is high.
- When analyzed by age group, the number of respondents in their 60s and late 40s, responding that they “actively watch” baseball games was high. On the other hand, the higher the age group, the more respondents’ interest in professional baseball had “decreased” during the past year. This evidences a danger of long-time fans moving away from Japanese baseball. Furthermore, the younger the age group, the lower their interest in professional baseball, with martial arts becoming conspicuously more popular.

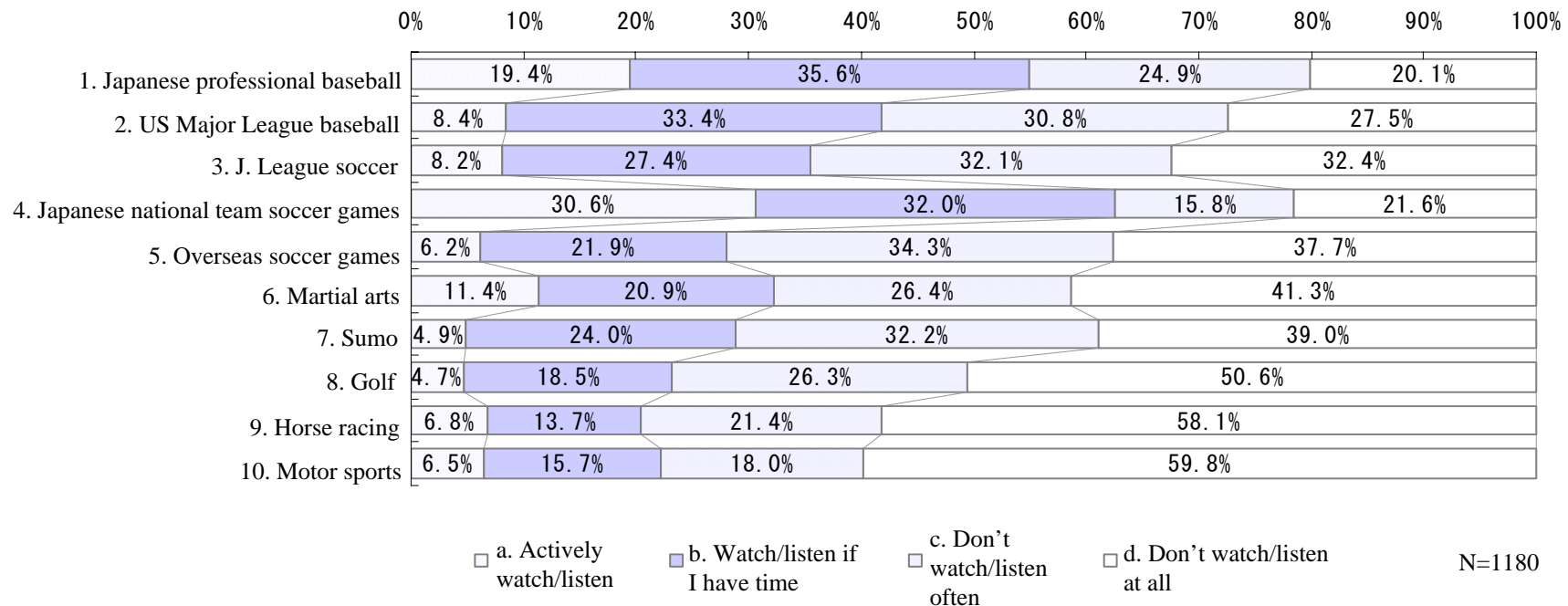
Summary of Survey Results (Continued)

- When professional baseball and J. League soccer were compared from the perspective of league management, the only item that respondents considered superior in baseball was “business advantage.” From this, we can assume that potential as a business was considered to be higher for professional baseball. Regarding other items, particularly “internationality” and “closeness to regional community,” a majority of respondents answered that the J. League is superior.
- Most commonly cited as necessary factors for future professional baseball were “draft system reform” (51.4%), “fostering and discovering attractive players” (49.5%), “review of new entry barriers” (46.6%). Multiple answers regarding new entries showed that 68.5% of respondents believed it was “desirable” that there should be new companies entering, while 21.6% of respondents thought that even if there were new companies entering they will “not cause a big change.” In contrast, regarding the “shift to a one-league system” the controversy which attracted much attention this season, the percentage of respondents who thought it necessary is extremely low at 3.3%. It can be said that the advancement of internal structural reform is called for, aided by the incorporation of innovative ideas by new companies entering the field.

Japanese Professional Baseball Still Highly Popular

- When asked about the frequency with which they watch professional sports games, “actively watch” was the highest for the matches of Japan’s national soccer team, with 30.6%. This also took the highest percentage when analyzed by age group. Together with the response “would watch if I had time,” only Japanese professional baseball and the Japan national soccer team’s games recorded a majority.

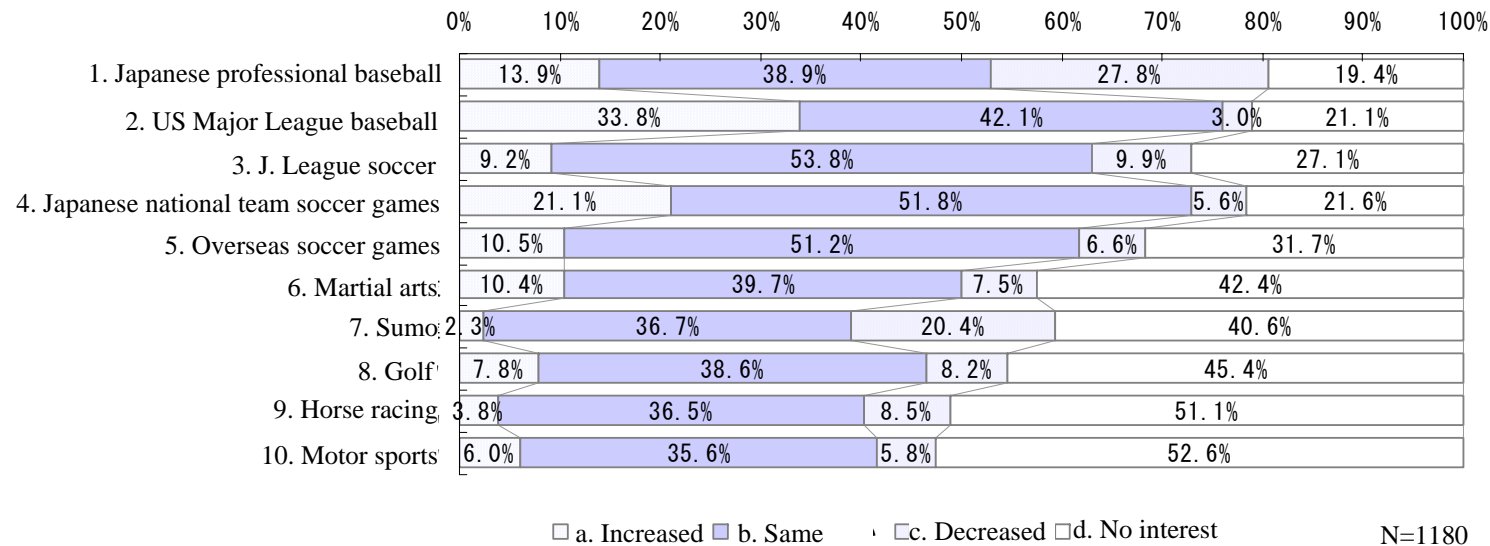
■ How often do you watch or listen to professional sports via TV, radio, the Internet, etc.?
(One answer for each sport)



Signs of Fans Moving Away from Japanese Professional Baseball

- When asked about changes in interest level regarding Japanese professional baseball during the past year, those responding “interest increased” and “interest the same” combined to total 52.8%; while those who responded “interest decreased” accounted for 27.8%; the highest in all sports.
- The sports in which the ratio of people whose interest level grew during the past year was highest for Major League baseball, standing at 33.8%.

■ How did your level of interest during the past year change for the following professional sports?
(One answer for each sport)



Even Persistent Popularity Decreased among Respondents in Their 60s and Late 40s

- When analyzed by age group, the number of respondents in their 60s and late 40s, responding that they “actively watch” baseball games was high. On the other hand, the higher the age group, the more respondents’ interest in professional baseball had “decreased” during the past year. This evidences a danger of long-time fans moving away from Japanese baseball. Furthermore, the younger the age group, the lower their interest in professional baseball, with martial arts becoming conspicuously more popular.

Professional baseball watching/listening via TV, radio, the Internet, etc.

	a. Actively watch/listen	b. Watch/listen if I have time	c. Don't watch or listen often	d. Don't watch or listen at all	
19 or under	11.1%	23.7%	28.1%	37.0%	N=135
20 – 24	19.5%	28.6%	23.4%	28.6%	N=77
25 – 29	16.0%	32.1%	23.7%	28.2%	N=156
30 – 34	16.7%	34.1%	25.8%	23.5%	N=132
35 – 39	20.2%	34.5%	28.6%	16.7%	N=84
40 – 44	17.0%	31.9%	29.1%	22.0%	N=141
45 – 49	27.4%	39.7%	24.7%	8.2%	N=73
50 – 54	18.8%	47.5%	20.6%	13.1%	N=160
55 – 59	19.0%	44.0%	29.8%	7.1%	N=84
60 or over	32.6%	39.9%	18.8%	8.7%	N=138

Martial arts watching/listening via TV, radio, the Internet, etc.

	a. Actively watch/listen	b. Watch/listen if I have time	c. Don't watch or listen often	d. Don't watch or listen at all	
19 or under	8.1%	12.6%	23.0%	56.3%	N=135
20 – 24	22.1%	19.5%	15.6%	42.9%	N=77
25 – 29	18.6%	26.9%	23.1%	31.4%	N=156
30 – 34	15.2%	26.5%	22.0%	36.4%	N=132
35 – 39	14.3%	23.8%	33.3%	28.6%	N=84
40 – 44	11.3%	22.7%	28.4%	37.6%	N=141
45 – 49	8.2%	16.4%	31.5%	43.8%	N=73
50 – 54	6.3%	18.9%	33.3%	41.5%	N=159
55 – 59	7.1%	15.5%	29.8%	47.6%	N=84
60 or over	5.1%	21.9%	24.8%	48.2%	N=137

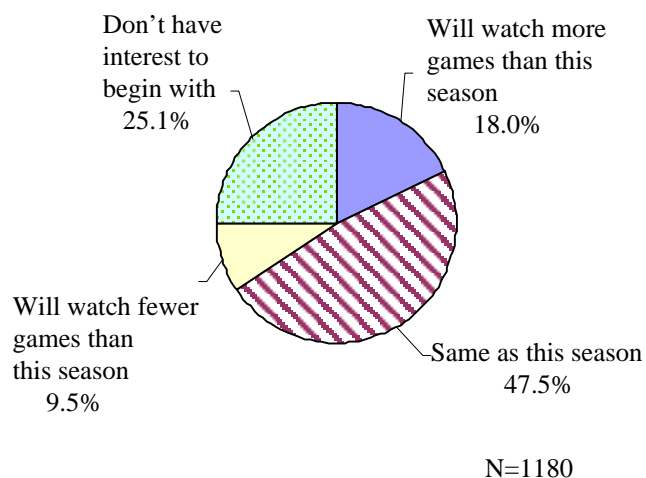
Changes in the interest level in professional Japanese baseball this past year

	a. Increased	b. Same	c. Decreased	d. No interest	
19 or under	20.0%	34.8%	14.8%	30.4%	N=135
20 – 24	18.2%	35.1%	16.9%	29.9%	N=77
25 – 29	19.4%	36.1%	16.8%	27.7%	N=155
30 – 34	19.8%	29.8%	27.5%	22.9%	N=131
35 – 39	9.5%	34.5%	34.5%	21.4%	N=84
40 – 44	13.5%	43.3%	24.8%	18.4%	N=141
45 – 49	11.1%	43.1%	37.5%	8.3%	N=72
50 – 54	8.8%	41.9%	36.9%	12.5%	N=160
55 – 59	7.1%	42.9%	38.1%	11.9%	N=84
60 or over	8.7%	47.1%	36.7%	8.0%	N=138

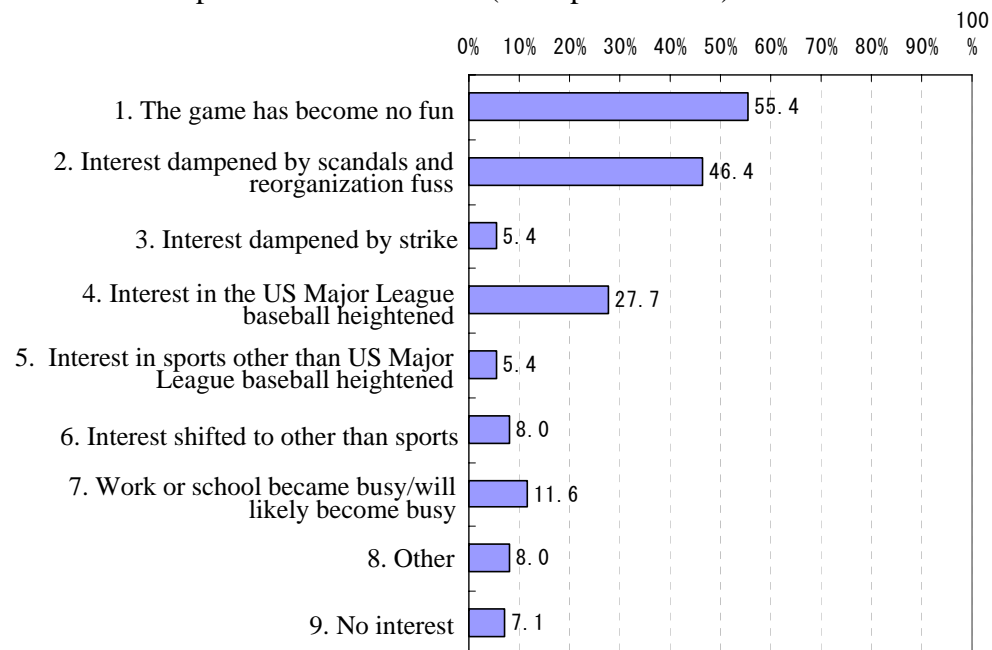
Approximately 10% of Respondents Intended to Watch Fewer Games Next Season

- People who responded that next season they “will watch fewer games than this season” stood at 9.5% of the total. The main reasons stated were “the game has become no fun” (55.4%), “interest dampened by scandals and reorganization fuss”(46.4%), and “interest in the US Major League baseball heightened.”

■ Will you watch more Japanese professional baseball next season than this season?



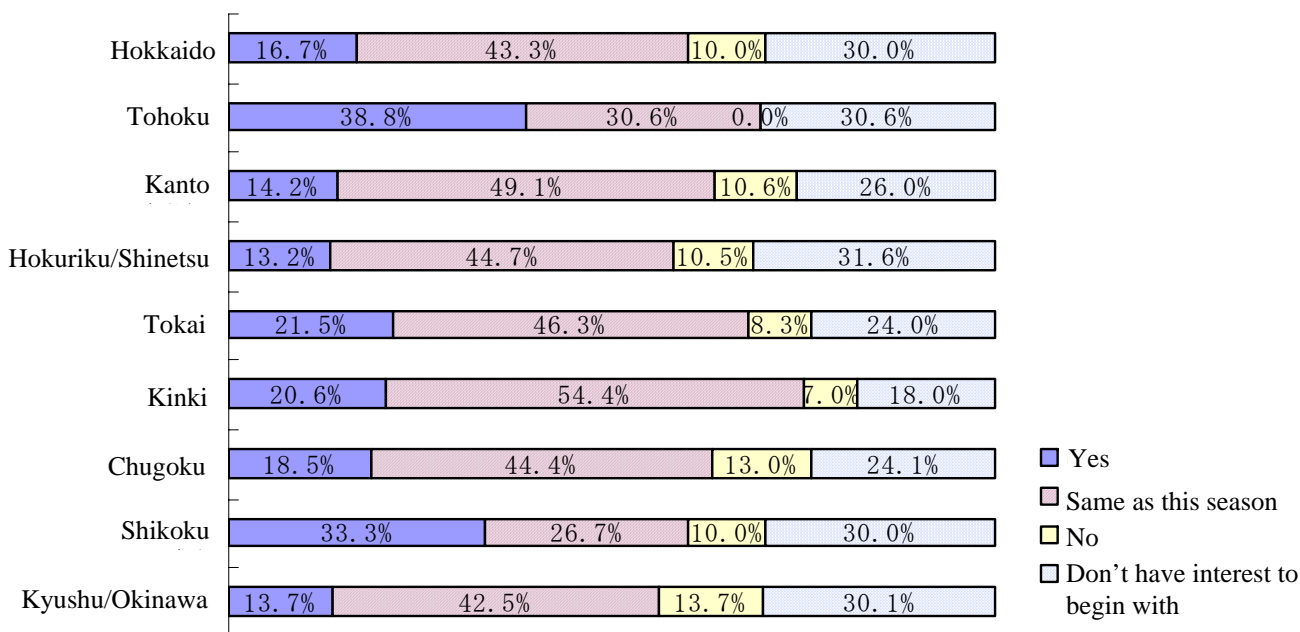
■ To those who answered “will watch fewer games than this season”
What is the reason that reduces the frequency of your watching Japanese professional baseball? (Multiple answers)



Almost 40% of Tohoku Respondents Intended to Watch More Games Next Season — the Highest in Regional Terms

- Looking at responses by region, in Tohoku, which hosts Rakuten's first and second string teams, which will debut in the Pacific League next season, respondents who chose "will watch more games than this season" stood at 38.8%; the highest in regional terms, and no one responded "will watch fewer games than this season."

■ Will you watch more Japanese professional baseball next season than this season?
(By region)

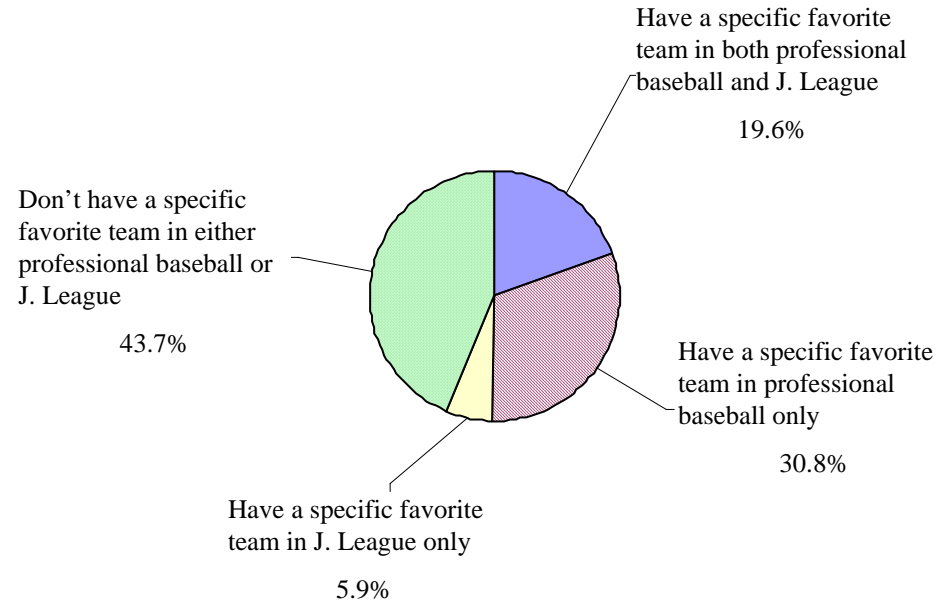


N=1180

Support for Specific Teams Underpins the Popularity of Professional Baseball

- Including respondents who do not reside geographically close to any baseball team home area, it is apparent that more than half of respondents have specific favorite teams. This rate is approximately twice the number of respondents who have specific favorite soccer J. League teams. This shows that support for specific teams underpins the popularity of professional baseball.

■ Do you have any specific teams that you support in Japanese professional baseball and J. League (J1, J2) or not? (One answer only)

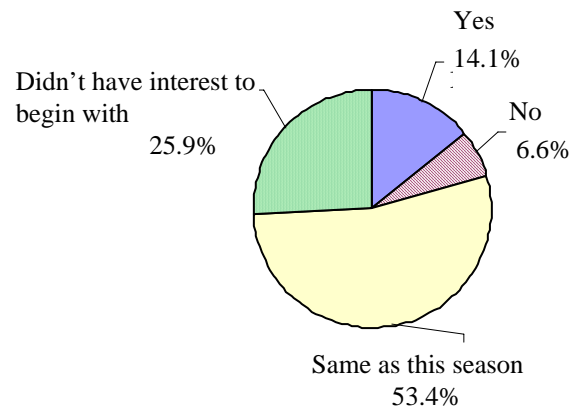


N=1180

US Major League Baseball Has Become Dramatically More Popular

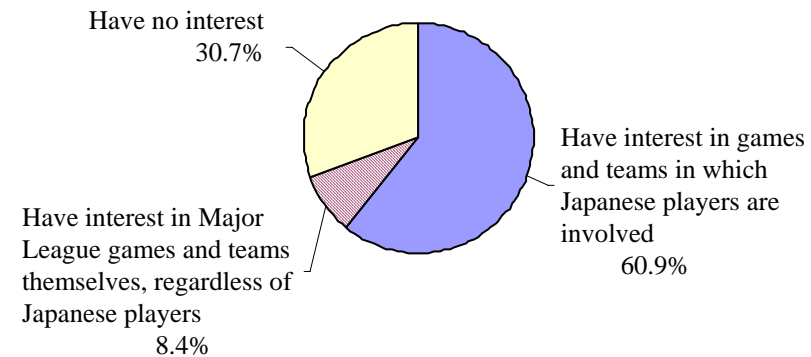
- About 70% responded that they will watch as many or more US Major League games next season. Those responding “have interest” in games and teams in which Japanese players are involved stood at 60.9%.

■ Will you watch more US Major League games where Japanese players are involved next season than this season?



N=1180

■ Please indicate the kind of interest you have in US Major League baseball.

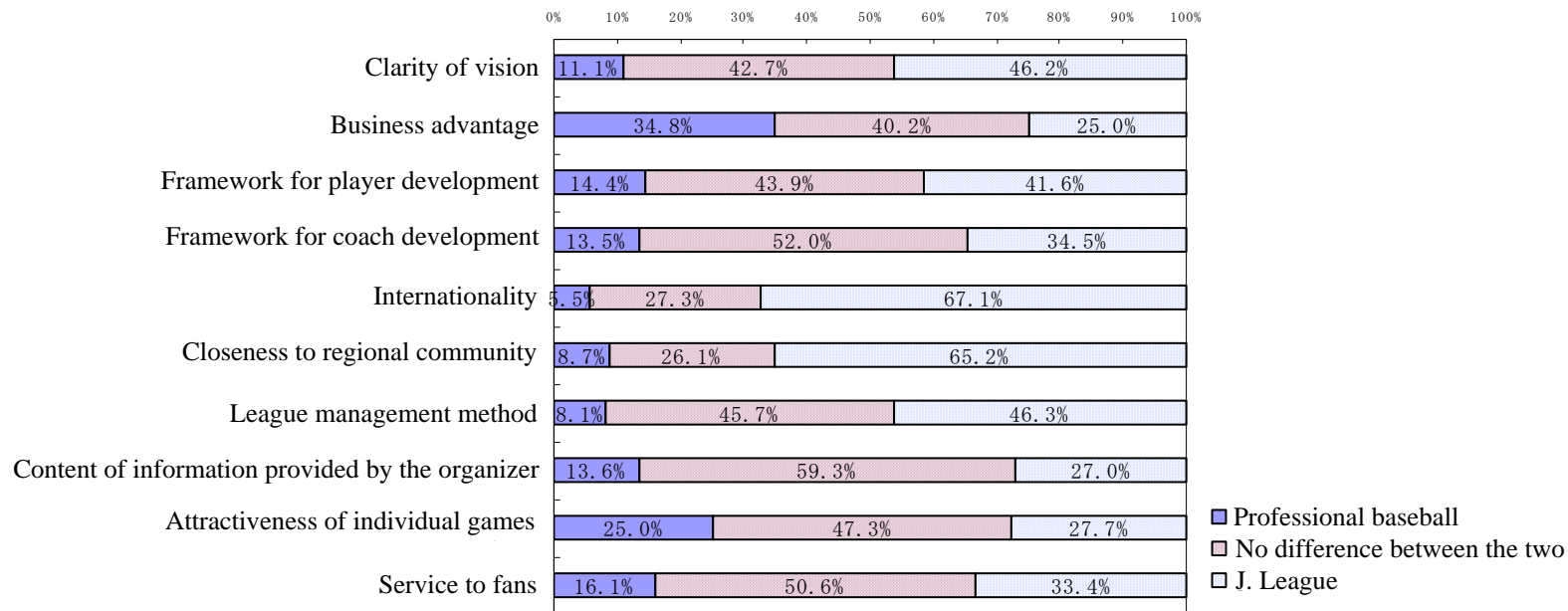


N=1180

J. League Wins in League Management Ability

- When professional baseball and J. League soccer were compared from the perspective of league management, the only item that respondents considered superior in baseball was “business advantage.” Regarding other items, particularly “internationality” and “closeness to regional community,” a majority of respondents answered that the J. League is superior.

■ Comparing Japanese professional baseball and J. League, which is superior in each item? (One answer for each item)



N=1180

Majority Hope for Reform of the Draft System

- Most commonly cited as necessary factors for future professional baseball were “draft system reform” (51.4%), “fostering and discovering attractive players” (49.5%), “review of new entry barriers” (46.6%). In contrast, regarding the “shift to a one-league system” the controversy which attracted much attention this season, the percentage of respondents who thought it necessary is extremely low at 3.3%

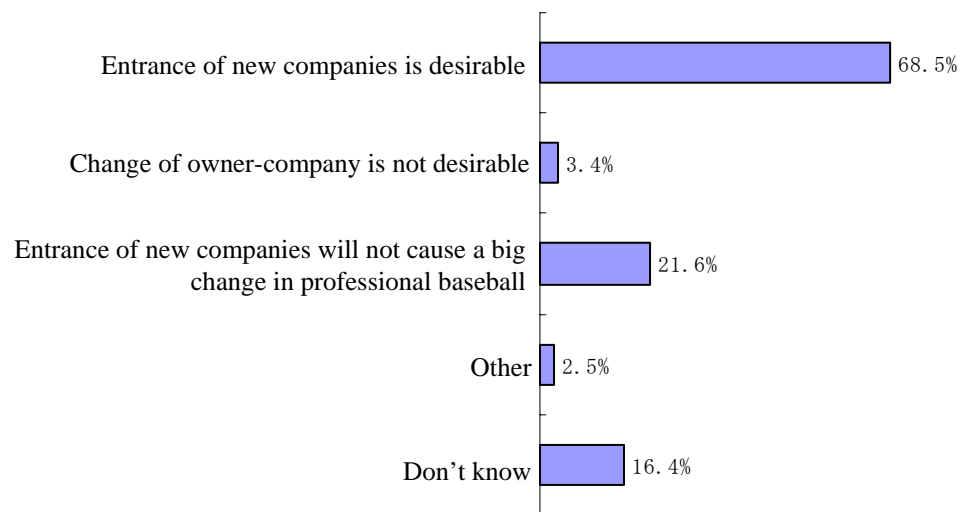
Which factor do you think necessary for the future of Japanese professional baseball? (Multiple answers)	%
1. Superior management ability of each owner company	31.9
2. Professional baseball organization and the league's leadership	30.5
3. Demonstration of professional baseball organization and the league's vision	30.6
4. Review of new entry barriers	46.6
5. Labor-management cooperation	16.7
6. Draft system reform	51.4
7. Free agent system reform	36.7
8. Review of the broadcasting charge distribution framework	33.6
9. Shift to a one-league system	3.3
10. Reform of game system including the pennant race, play-offs and the Japan series	16.3
11. Fostering and discovering attractive players	49.5
12. Fostering and discovering attractive field managers and coaches	29.1
13. Community-oriented team management	35.5
14. Creation of Asian championship	11.4
15. Creation of championship on a global scale	14.1
16. Enhancement of fan services	39.4
17. Improvement of baseball stadia and other facilities	16.9
18. Strengthening of TV broadcasts	24.3
19. Enhancement of Internet information provision	14.0
20. Other	2.8
21. Don't know	14.7

N=1180

Approximately 70% of Respondents Favorable to New Companies Entering

- Multiple answers regarding new entries into the professional baseball owner companies showed that 68.5% of respondents believed it was “desirable” that there should be new companies entering, while 21.6% of respondents thought that even if there were new companies entering they will “not cause a big change.”

■ What do you think about team owner-company changes in Japanese professional baseball from next season? (Multiple answers)



N=1180

Appendix: Definition of the Sports in This Survey

- Japanese professional baseball: Includes first and second string teams. Official games only (does not include friendly games)
- US Major League: Official games only (does not include friendly games)
- J. League: J1 and J2 official games only (does not include friendly games)
- Japan national soccer team's games: International games, includes friendly games
Also includes games by A representatives (under 23. etc.)
- Overseas soccer: Only official games by the Premier League, Serie A and other overseas club teams, and official games by national representatives of Brazil, France and other countries besides Japan (does not include friendly games)
- Martial arts: Includes professional wrestling, K-1, PRIDE
- Golf: Includes domestic tours and overseas tours
- Horse racing: Includes central, local and overseas horse racing
- Motor sports: Includes 4-wheel and 2-wheel, as well as overseas motor sports
- Sumo: Matches in all tournaments