Experiences & Aspirations of Foreign Students in the USA

THE SURVEY REPORTIKA

SURVEY SERIES OF THE IJ-REPORTIKA

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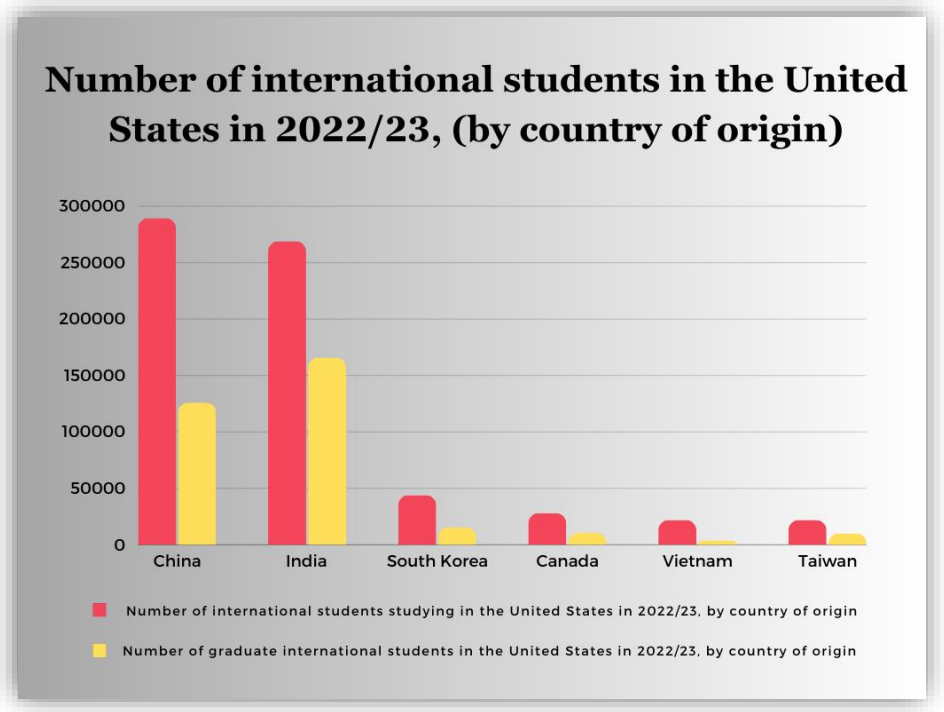
Introduction

In an era marked by globalization and cultural exchange, the experiences of international students studying abroad provide invaluable insights into cross-cultural dynamics, educational systems, and societal perceptions. This is the second survey in series of "The Survey Reportika" presented by the Investigative Journalism Reportika. This iteration aims to delve into the multifaceted experiences and perspectives of students from China, India, and South Korea studying in universities across the United States of America. These three countries are among the top sources of international students in the USA, making their perspectives particularly significant.



Conducted anonymously, this survey gathered responses from 1,500 students, with 500 each from China, India, and South Korea, enrolled in various universities throughout the USA. The participants, while representing diverse academic disciplines and backgrounds, shared their candid insights on a range of topics, including their academic experiences, cultural adjustment, perceptions of freedom, views on their home countries, and reflections on their decision to study abroad.

By exploring the perspectives of these students, this report endeavours to offer a nuanced understanding of their academic journeys, cultural adaptation processes, and evolving perceptions of their home countries and the USA. Through their anonymity, participants were able to express themselves freely, contributing valuable insights that can inform future discussions on international education, cultural exchange, and global citizenship.

In the following sections, we present a detailed analysis of the survey findings, categorized into relevant themes, accompanied by reflections and implications drawn from the data. It is our hope that this report serves as a resource for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders interested in fostering a more inclusive and enriching educational environment for all students, regardless of their cultural background or nationality.

Survey Overview

Conducted from February 1, 2024, to April 30, 2024, this extensive survey engaged 1,500 participants from diverse backgrounds, seeking to delve into the sentiments of students from China, India, and South Korea pursuing higher education in the USA. Utilizing a hybrid approach that blends offline and online methods, the survey ensures comprehensive representation across genders, religions, and ethnicities. Designed to explore motivations, challenges, and aspirations, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the experiences of international students abroad, contributing valuable insights to ongoing conversations on global education, cultural adaptation, and international relations.

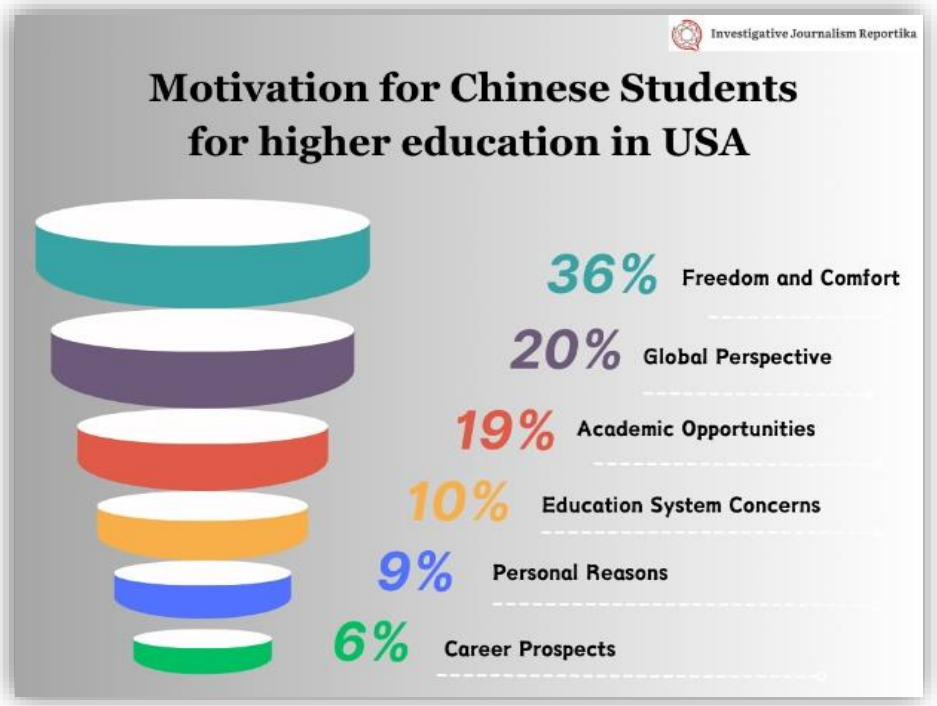
Representation

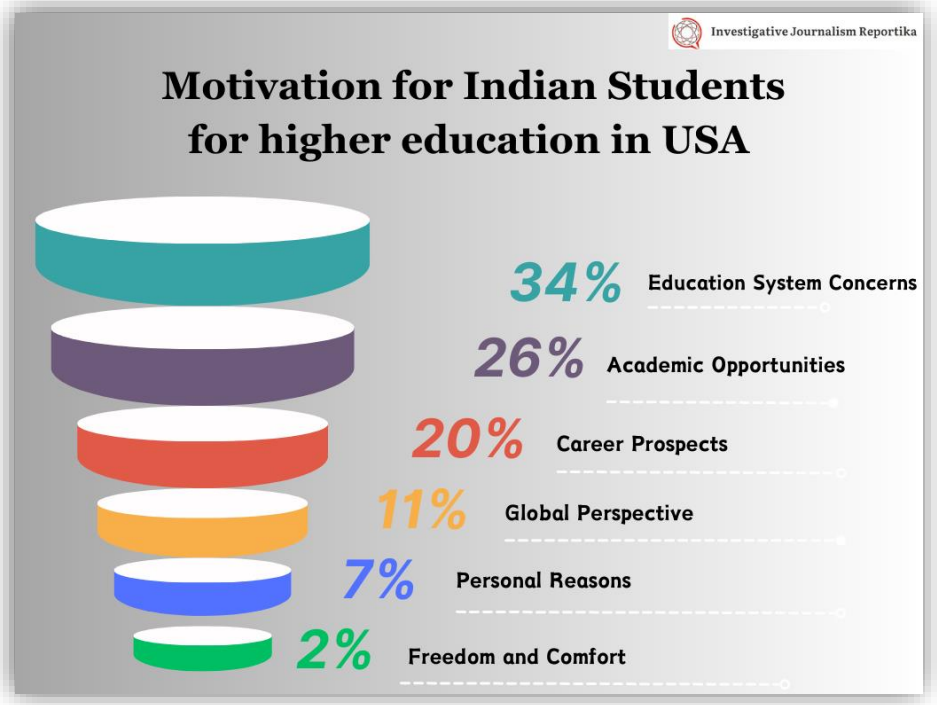
The participants in this survey represent a diverse array of students from China, India, and South Korea studying in the USA, spanning various prominent universities and encompassing all relevant age groups and genders. The universities represented in this survey include esteemed institutions such as Harvard University, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), University of California, Berkeley, Columbia University, New York University (NYU), University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, and Princeton University. This wide-ranging representation ensures a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of international students across different academic and cultural contexts.

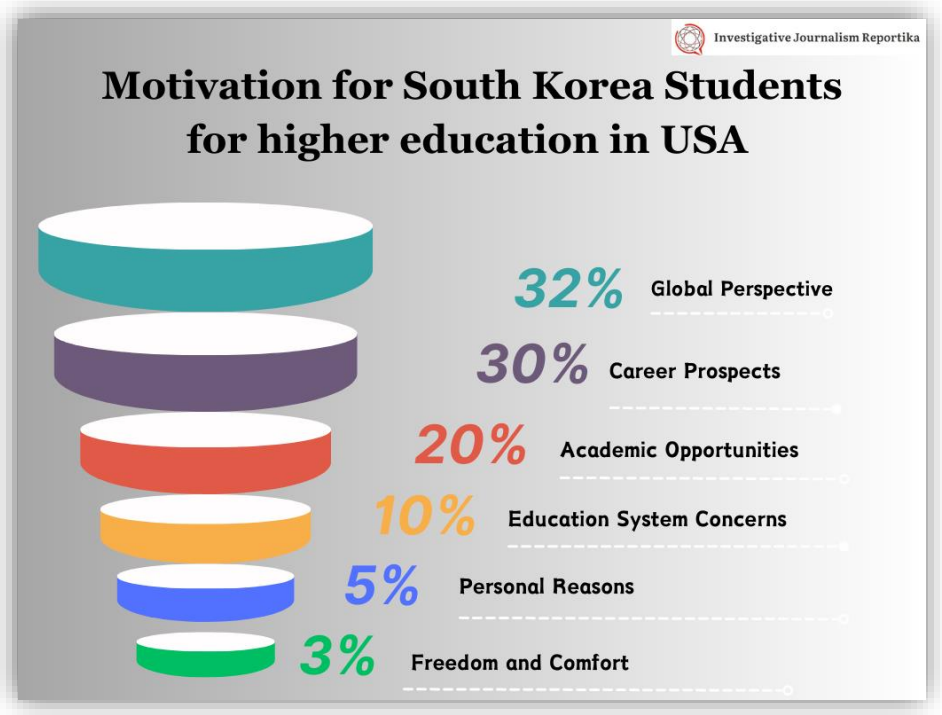
Survey Methodology

The survey employed a hybrid methodology, seamlessly integrating online forms hosted on our website with on-the-ground connections facilitated by our reporters. This innovative approach was designed to facilitate a comprehensive and inclusive data collection process, allowing us to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. By leveraging both online platforms and direct engagement, we aimed to reach a broader audience and gather insights from students from China, India, and South Korea studying in the USA across various contexts and demographics.

Q1: What motivated you to pursue higher education in the USA instead of your home country?







Freedom and Comfort

- **China :** 36% expressed dissatisfaction with China's political system and restrictions on freedom of speech and expression, leading them to seek educational opportunities in a more democratic environment like the USA.
- **South Korea:** 3% of students felt that the USA offered a more open and comfortable environment, free from the intense societal pressures and expectations often associated with South Korean culture. They appreciated the relative freedom to express themselves and explore diverse interests.
- **India:** 2% highlighted the desire for a better quality of life, including access to healthcare, infrastructure, and overall standard of living, as a motivating factor for pursuing higher education in the USA.

Global Perspective

- **South Korea:** 32% students were driven by the desire to gain a global perspective and exposure to international cultures. They valued the opportunity to study in a multicultural environment, which they believed would enhance their understanding of different cultures and improve their global competence.
- **China:** 20% highlighted the pursuit of a more global perspective and exposure to international cultures as their driving force.
- **India:** 11% highlighted the pursuit of a more global perspective and exposure to international cultures as their driving force, seeking to broaden their horizons and expand their understanding of global issues.

Academic Opportunities

- **India**: 26% cited the desire for access to a more diverse range of academic programs and research opportunities as their primary motivation, recognizing the prestige and quality of education offered by American universities

- **South Korea:** 20% portion of students cited the diverse range of academic programs and research opportunities available in the USA as their primary motivation. They were attracted to the innovative and interdisciplinary approach to education offered by American institutions, which they felt would provide them with a broader and more flexible educational experience.
- **China:** 19% cited the desire for access to a more diverse range of academic programs and research opportunities as their primary motivation.

Education System Concerns

- **India:** 34% expressed concerns about the rigidity and outdated nature of India's higher education system, opting instead for the innovative teaching methods and interdisciplinary approach offered by American institutions.
- **China:** 10% mentioned concerns about the rigidity and competitiveness of China's higher education system, opting instead for the more flexible and holistic approach to learning offered by American institutions.
- **South Korea:** 10% students expressed concerns about the rigidity and competitiveness of South Korea's education system. They sought the more flexible and holistic approach to learning offered by American universities, which they believed would allow them to explore their interests more freely and develop critical thinking skills.

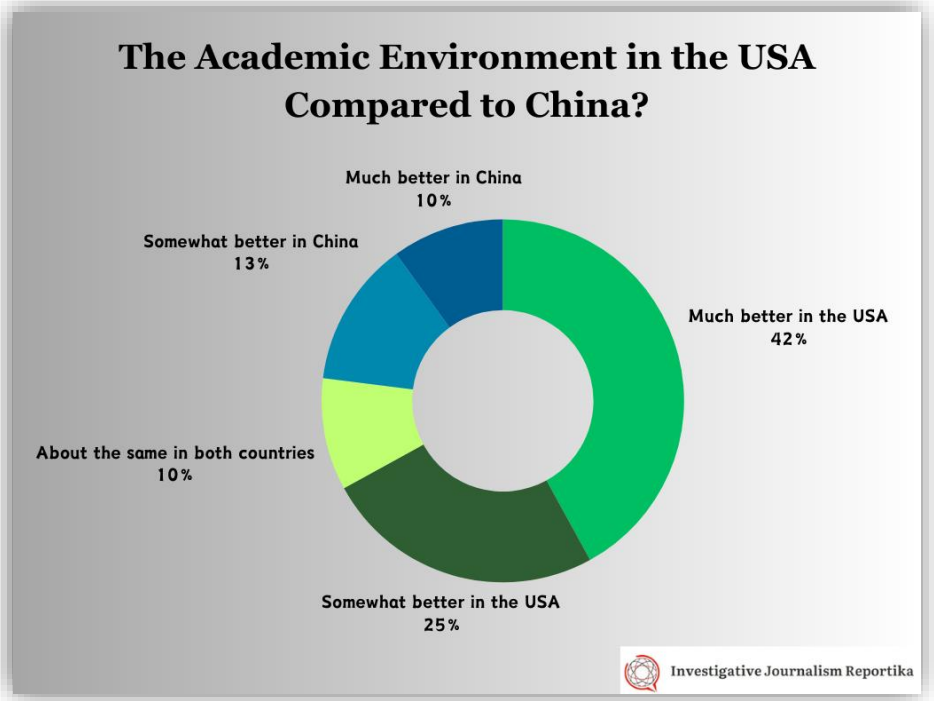
Personal Reasons

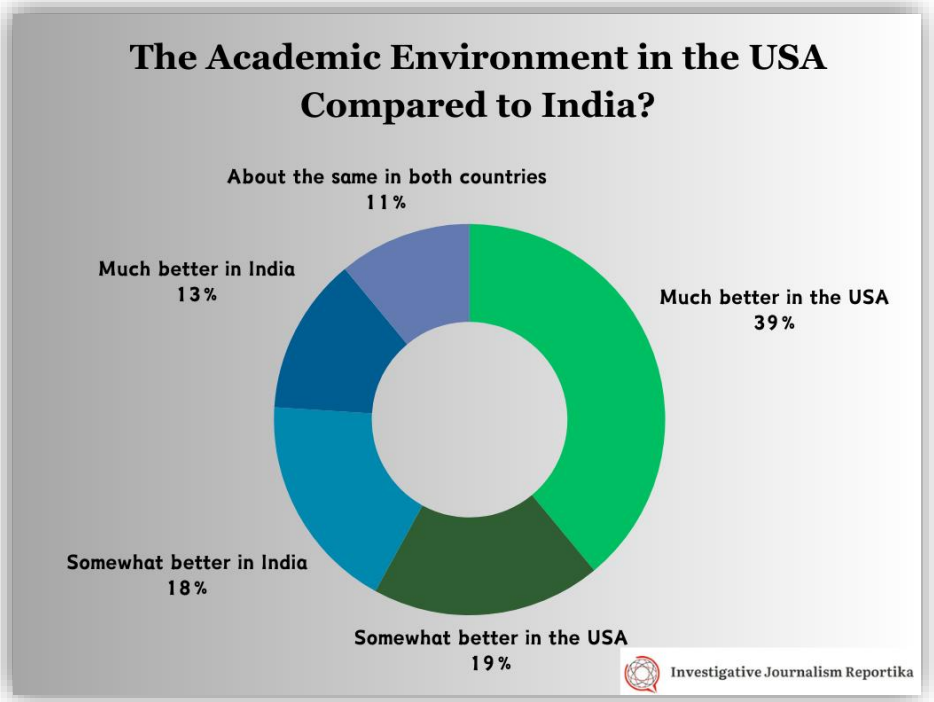
- **China:** 9% mentioned personal or familial reasons for choosing to study in the USA, such as family ties or a desire for personal development.
- **India:** 7% mentioned personal or familial reasons for choosing to study in the USA, such as family ties, or the pursuit of personal development and self-discovery.
- **South Korea:** 5% group of students mentioned personal or familial reasons for choosing to study in the USA. These included having family ties in the USA, personal aspirations for self-development, or a desire to experience life in a different country.

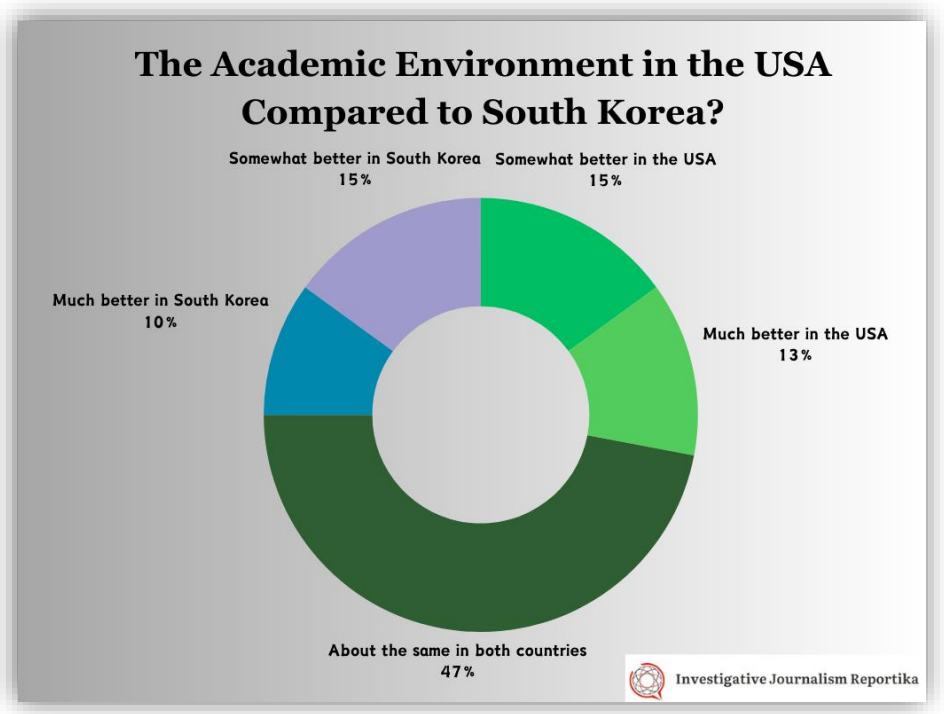
Career Prospects

- **South Korea:** 30% of students were motivated by the prospect of better career opportunities and networking connections in the USA. They recognized the potential for professional advancement and global networking that studying in the USA could offer, which they believed would significantly enhance their career prospects in the future**.**
- **India:** 20% cited the allure of better career prospects and job opportunities in the USA, acknowledging the potential for professional growth and advancement in fields such as technology, business, and research.
- **China:** 6% cited the allure of better career prospects and networking opportunities in the USA, recognizing the potential for professional advancement and global networking connections.

Q2: From your experience, how would you rate the academic environment in the USA compared to your home country?







Much better in the USA

China: 42% of participants rated the academic environment in the USA as much better. They cited factors such as greater academic freedom, more diverse opportunities, and advanced resources as reasons for their preference.

India: 39% of participants expressed that they perceive the academic environment in the USA to be significantly superior to that in India. They based this opinion on factors such as better infrastructure, more advanced research facilities, higher quality of education, and greater opportunities for academic and professional growth in the USA.

South Korea: 13% of respondents emphasized the diverse range of academic programs, research opportunities, and resources available in American institutions. They appreciated the emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, and interdisciplinary learning in the USA.

Somewhat better in the USA

China: 25% of participants rated the academic environment in the USA as somewhat better. They acknowledged some advantages in the USA such as more innovative teaching methods or better facilities but didn't see a substantial difference.

India: 19% of participants indicated that they believe the academic environment in the USA is somewhat better than that in India. While they acknowledge some advantages in the USA, they still see room for improvement or recognize certain strengths in the Indian academic system.

South Korea: 15% of respondents acknowledged the strengths of the US academic environment but also recognized areas where improvements could be made, such as affordability and student support services. They appreciated the competitive nature of education in the USA.

About the same in both countries

South Korea: 47% of respondents viewed the academic environments in the USA and South Korea as comparable. They noted similarities in teaching methodologies, research standards, and academic rigor, recognizing that both countries have strengths and weaknesses in different areas.

India: 11% of participants perceive the academic environments in both the USA and India to be relatively similar. They have observed comparable standards of education, research opportunities, or overall academic experiences in both countries.

China: 10% of participants felt that the academic environments in both the USA and China were about the same. They noted similarities in the quality of education or academic experiences in both countries.

Somewhat better in Home Country

India: 18% of participants expressed the opinion that the academic environment in India is somewhat better than that in the USA. They value aspects of the Indian academic system such as cultural familiarity, lower costs of education, or specific strengths in certain academic disciplines.

South Korea: 15% of respondents believed that South Korea offers certain advantages in its academic environment, such as a strong emphasis on STEM fields, technological innovation, and rigorous academic standards. They also cited the high global rankings of South Korean universities in certain disciplines.

China: 13% of participants rated the academic environment in China as somewhat better. They pointed out aspects such as a stronger emphasis on discipline or more rigorous academic standards as reasons for their preference.

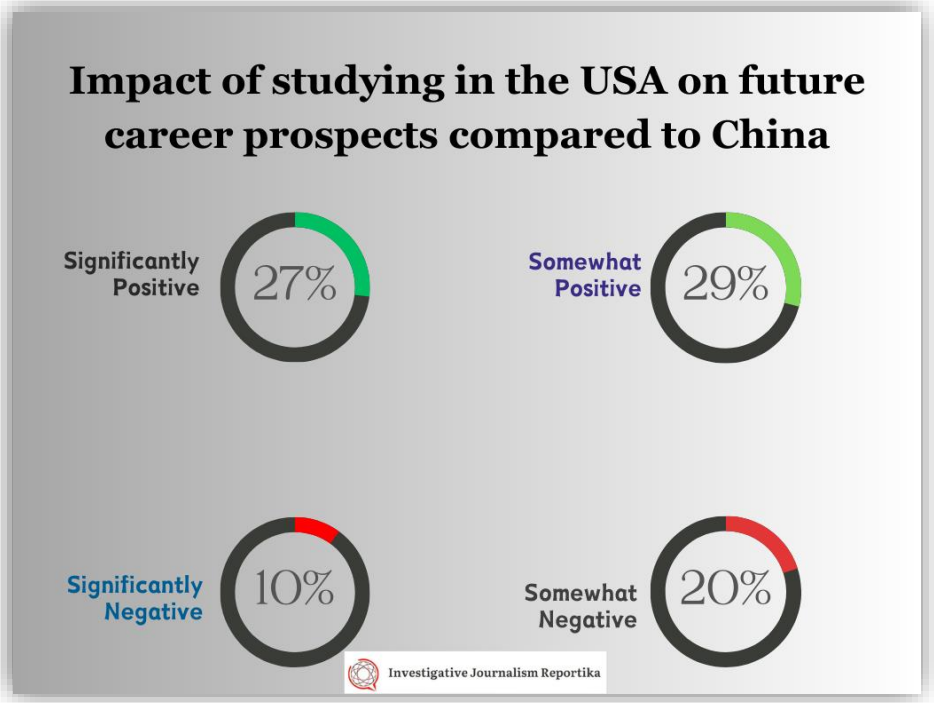
Much better in Home Country

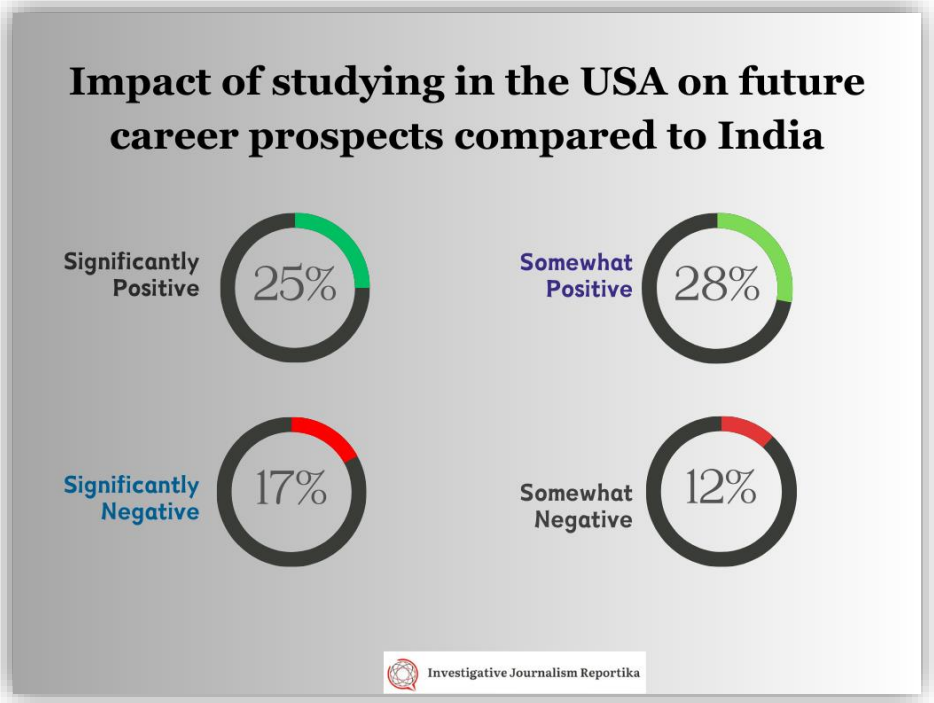
India: 13% of participants believe that the academic environment in India is significantly superior to that in the USA. They base this opinion on factors such as a preference for Indian teaching methods, closer proximity to family and cultural roots, or better career prospects in the Indian context.

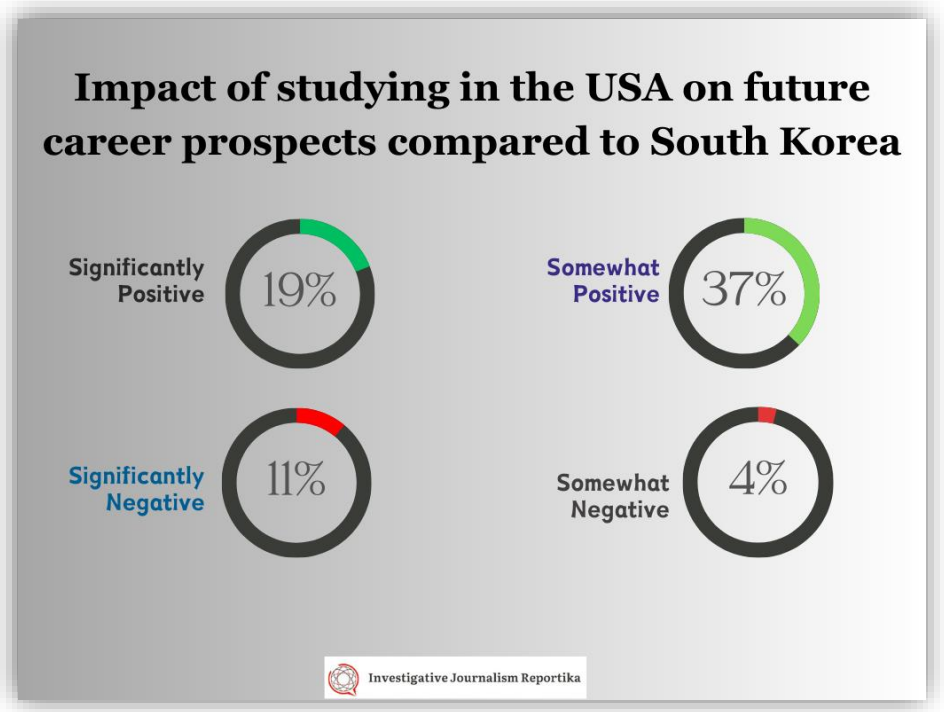
China: 10% of participants rated the academic environment in China as much better. They cited reasons such as cultural familiarity, closer relationships with professors, or specific academic strengths in China's educational system.

South Korea: 10% of respondents expressed a preference for the academic environment in South Korea, citing factors such as high-quality education, advanced research facilities, and a culture of academic excellence prevalent in South Korean universities.

Q3: How do you foresee studying in the USA impacting your future career compared to studying in your home country?







Significantly Positive

China: 27% of respondents expressed optimism regarding the significantly positive impact that studying in the USA could have on their future career prospects. They cited factors such as access to diverse academic programs, advanced research opportunities, and a global network of professionals as contributing factors to their positive outlook.

India: 25% of respondents expressed optimism regarding the significantly positive impact that studying in the USA could have on their future career prospects. They cited factors such as access to cutting-edge technologies, diverse career opportunities, and exposure to global markets as contributing factors to their positive outlook.

South Korea: 19% of students believed that studying in the USA would have a highly positive impact on their future careers. They highlighted the benefits of access to advanced research facilities, diverse academic programs, and the prestige of American universities. They also appreciated the opportunity to build a global network of professional contacts and gain exposure to innovative practices and ideas.

Somewhat Positive

South Korea: 37% of students anticipated a somewhat positive impact on their careers. They recognized the advantages of an American education, such as enhanced critical thinking skills and a global perspective. However, they also acknowledged potential challenges, such as adjusting to a different cultural and professional environment.

China: 29% of students anticipate a somewhat positive impact on their future careers as a result of studying in the USA. While acknowledging the potential benefits of an American education, they remained cautious about the challenges they face, such as cultural adaptation and competition in the job market.

India: 28% of students anticipate a somewhat positive impact on their future careers as a result of studying in the USA. While acknowledging the potential benefits of an American education, they

remained cautious about the challenges they face, such as cultural adaptation and competition in the job market.

Neutral

South Korea: 29% of students felt neutral about the impact of studying in the USA on their future careers. While they acknowledged the quality of education and opportunities available in the USA, they were uncertain about how these factors would translate into tangible career benefits. They believed that career success would depend more on individual effort and adaptability rather than the location of their education.

India: 18% of respondents expressed neutrality regarding the impact of studying in the USA on their future careers. They acknowledged the advantages of an American education but remained uncertain about how it would directly translate into their career trajectories.

China: 14% of respondents expressed neutrality regarding the impact of studying in the USA on their future careers. They acknowledged the advantages of an American education but remained uncertain about how it would directly translate into their career trajectories.

Somewhat Negative

China: 20% of students foresee a somewhat negative impact on their future career prospects due to studying in the USA. They expressed concerns about potential challenges such as visa restrictions, cultural barriers, or difficulties in finding employment post-graduation.

India: 17% of students foresee a somewhat negative impact on their future career prospects due to studying in the USA. They expressed concerns about potential challenges such as visa restrictions, cultural barriers, or difficulties in finding employment post-graduation.

South Korea: 11% of students foresaw a somewhat negative impact on their careers from studying in the USA. They expressed concerns about potential challenges, such as visa restrictions, cultural differences, and difficulties in re-integrating into the South Korean job market.

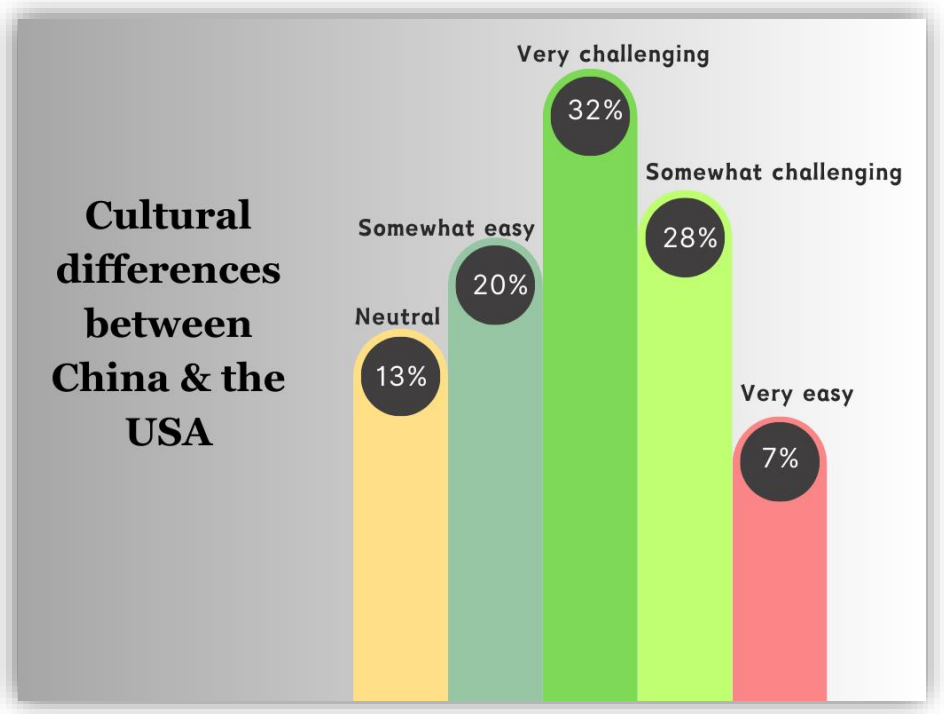
Significantly Negative

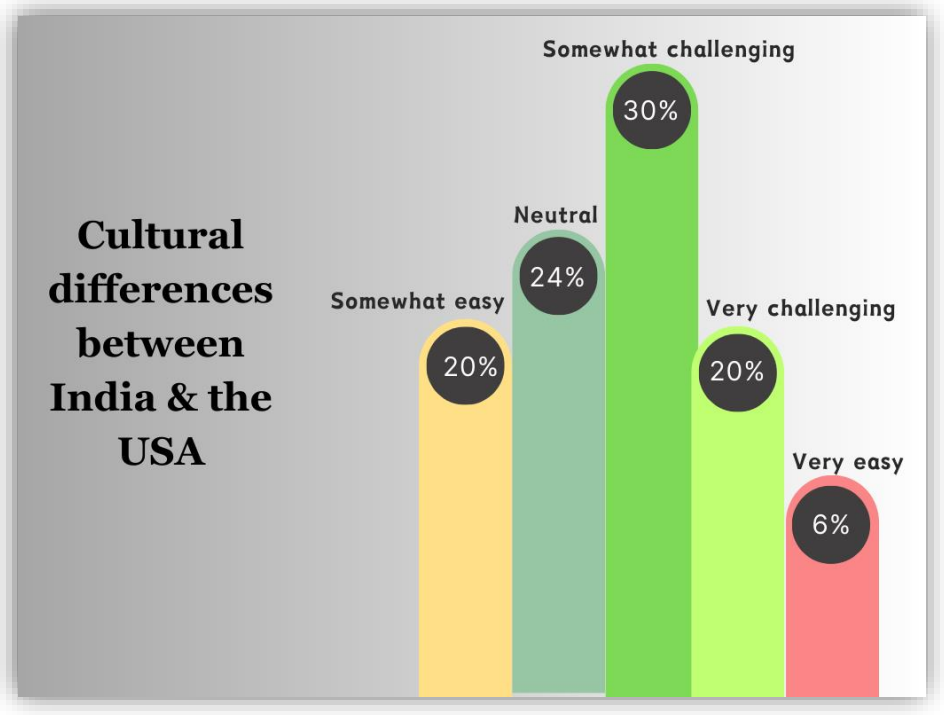
India: 12% of respondents believe that studying in the USA will have a significantly negative impact on their future career prospects compared to studying in India. They expressed concerns about potential obstacles such as limited job opportunities for international students, visa constraints, and difficulty adjusting to the American work culture.

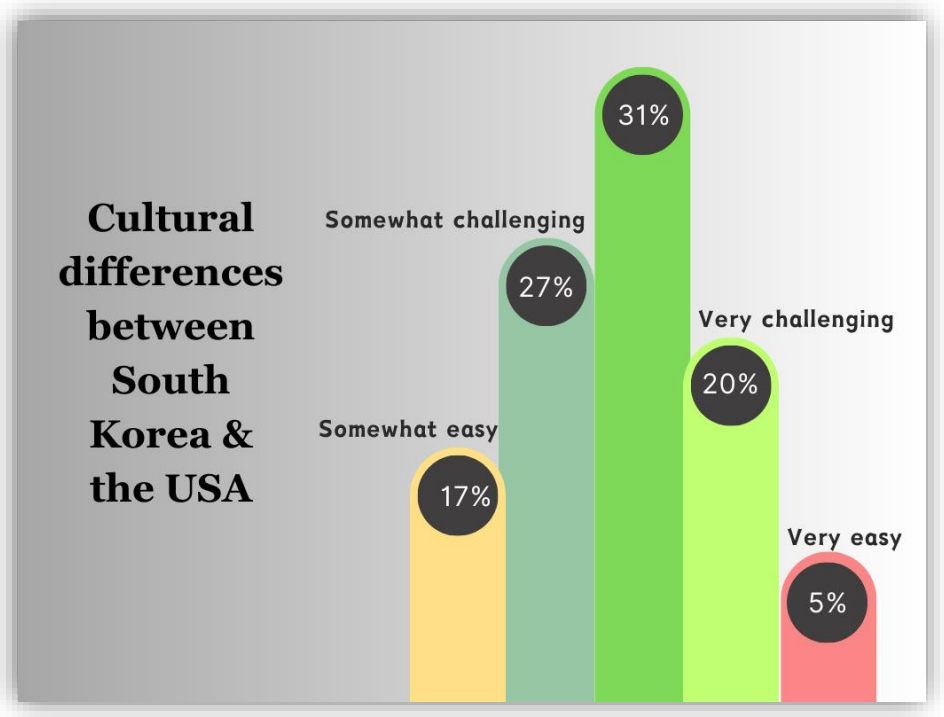
China: 10% of respondents believe that studying in the USA will have a significantly negative impact on their future career prospects compared to studying in China. They expressed concerns about potential obstacles such as racism against Chinese students leading to limited job opportunities, visa constraints, and difficulty integrating into the American workforce.

South Korea: 4% of students believed that studying in the USA would have a significantly negative impact on their future careers. They cited reasons such as potential discrimination, the high cost of education, and the fear of not finding suitable employment in the USA or South Korea after graduation. They were concerned that the time and resources invested in an American education might not yield the expected returns.

Q4: How challenging have you found adapting to cultural differences between your home country and the USA?







Very Easy

China: 7% of participants found it very easy to adapt to cultural differences between China and the USA. They had prior exposure to diverse cultures, strong language skills, or personal traits that facilitated their adaptation process.

India: 6% of participants found it very easy to adapt to cultural differences between India and the USA. They had prior exposure to diverse cultures, strong language skills, and personal traits that facilitated their adaptation process.

South Korea: 5% of students felt that adapting to cultural differences was very easy. They mentioned their previous exposure to Western culture through media, travel, or education, which helped them adjust smoothly. They also cited the welcoming and diverse environment in the USA as a factor that eased their transition.

Somewhat Easy

China: 20% of participants indicated that they found it somewhat easy to adapt to cultural differences between China and the USA. They faced minor challenges but overall found the adjustment process manageable due to their openness to new experiences and willingness to adapt.

India: 20% of participants indicated that they found it somewhat easy to adapt to cultural differences between India and the USA. They faced minor challenges but overall found the adjustment process manageable due to their openness to new experiences and willingness to adapt. They also pointed out that a large and helpful Indian diaspora in the USA assisted them in the process.

South Korea: 17% of students found the adaptation process somewhat easy. They highlighted the support systems available at universities, such as international student offices and cultural exchange programs, which helped them navigate cultural differences. They also appreciated the openness and friendliness of American peers.

Neutral

South Korea: 31% of students expressed neutrality regarding the difficulty of adapting to cultural differences. They acknowledged both the challenges and the supports available, feeling that the process was neither particularly difficult nor easy. These students often cited a balanced mix of familiar and unfamiliar cultural aspects that made their experience neutral.

India: 24% of participants reported feeling neutral about the challenge of adapting to cultural differences between India and the USA. They did not encounter significant difficulties or differences that stood out during their adaptation process, appreciating the blend of familiar and new experiences in both countries.

China: 13% of participants reported feeling neutral about the challenge of adapting to cultural differences between China and the USA. They did not encounter significant difficulties or differences that stood out during their adaptation process.

Somewhat Challenging

India: 30% of participants found it somewhat challenging to adapt to cultural differences between India and the USA. They faced obstacles such as language nuances, cultural norms, and lifestyle adjustments. Most participants in this category missed their parents and family and found it challenging to accept the new culture.

China: 28% of participants found it somewhat challenging to adapt to cultural differences between China and the USA. They encountered obstacles such as language barriers, unfamiliar social norms, and differences in daily routines. Additionally, they faced stereotypes or misconceptions about their culture, which contributed to their sense of challenge.

South Korea: 27% of students mentioned finding the cultural adaptation somewhat challenging. They cited difficulties such as language barriers, different social norms, and the high-paced and individualistic nature of American society. These students often missed the communal and hierarchical aspects of South Korean culture and found it hard to adjust to the more informal and egalitarian interactions in the USA.

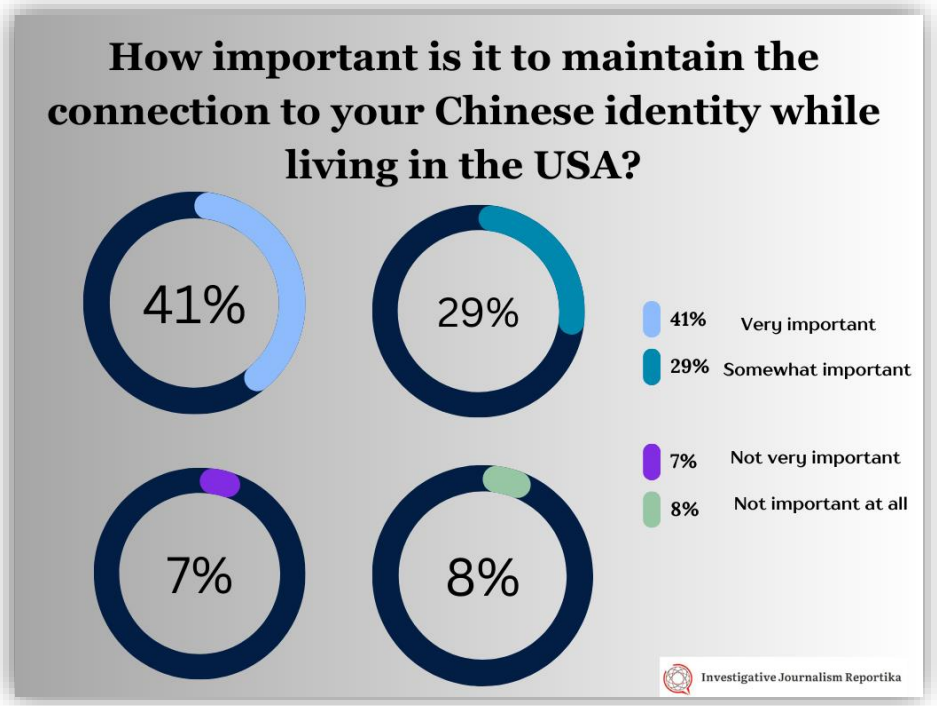
Very Challenging

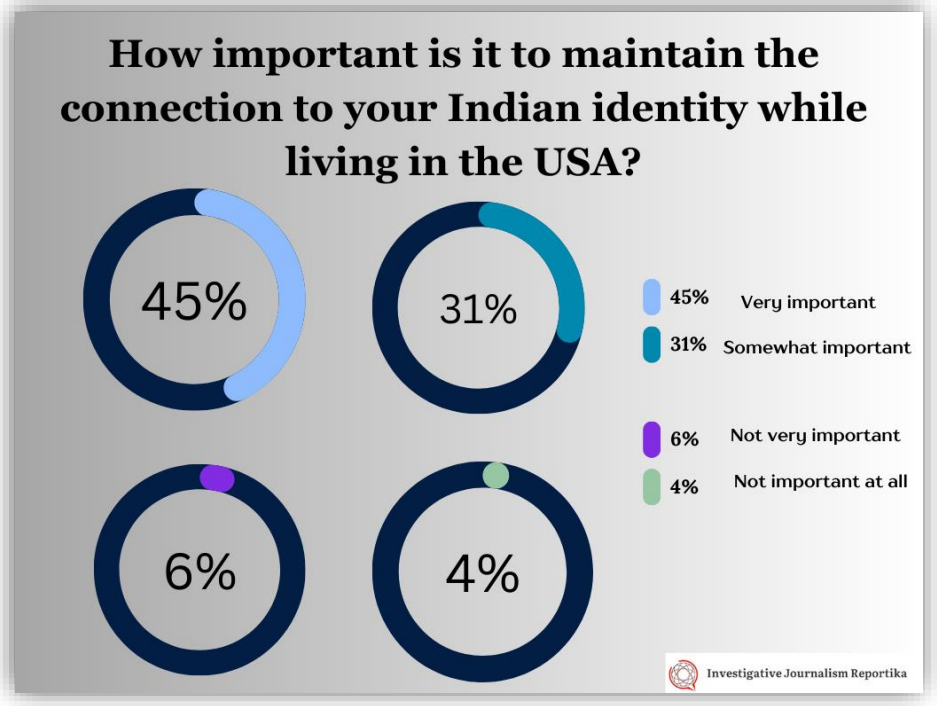
China: 32% of participants reported finding it very challenging to adapt to cultural differences between China and the USA. They experienced significant barriers such as racism and discrimination. These factors heightened their feelings of isolation, stress, and difficulty in integrating into the new cultural environment.

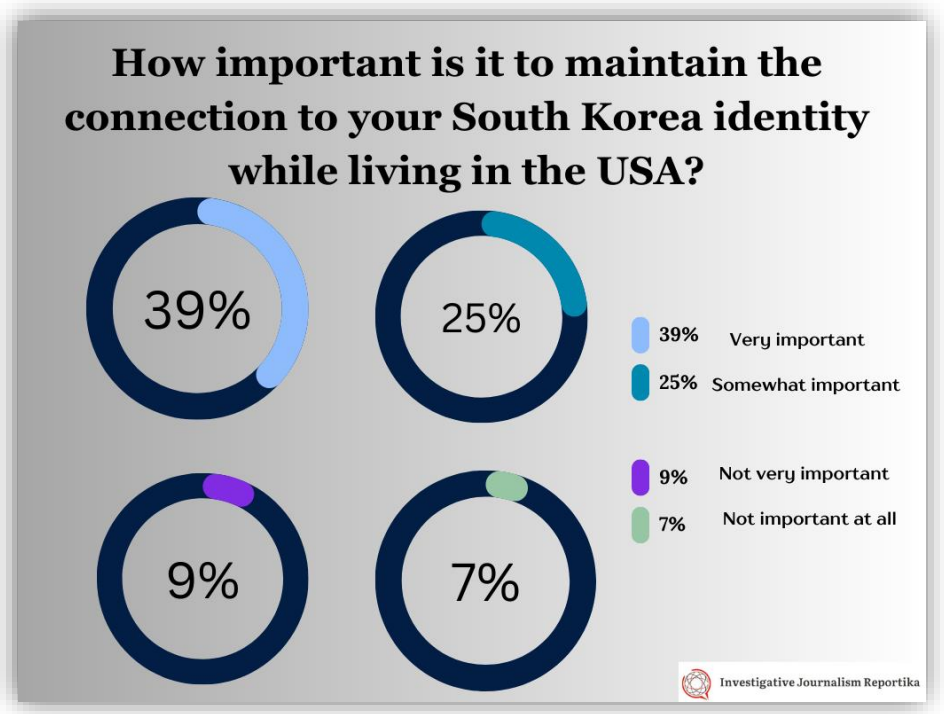
India: 20% of participants reported finding it very challenging to adapt to cultural differences between India and the USA. They encountered significant obstacles in navigating unfamiliar social customs, overcoming language barriers, and adjusting to different societal norms, which posed significant challenges to their integration into the new cultural environment. They missed helpful Indians back home and colorful festivals while adapting to the new place.

South Korea: 20% of students felt that adapting to cultural differences was very challenging. They cited factors such as racism, stereotypes, and a lack of understanding or acceptance from peers as significant barriers. These students missed the culture and food of South Korea the most. They also struggled with homesickness and the stark contrast in educational and social systems between the two countries.

Q5: How important is it for you to maintain your connection to your native identity while living in the USA?







Very Important

India: 45% consider it very important to maintain their connection to their Indian identity. They stay updated on Indian news, culture, and politics, and celebrate festivals, follow cricket matches, and watch Indian movies.

China: 41% consider it very important to maintain their connection to their Chinese identity. They engage in cultural events, prepare traditional dishes, and preserve their linguistic identity through language exchange programs. Most of these students live within the Chinese diaspora in the USA.

South Korea: 39% of students emphasized the importance of staying connected to their South Korean identity. They celebrate traditional festivals, participate in cultural events, and maintain culinary traditions, finding solace and belonging through these practices.

Somewhat Important

India: 31% view maintaining their Indian identity as somewhat important. They stay connected through social media and occasionally follow Indian politics, while also celebrating festivals and language. They balance staying connected with avoiding homesickness.

China: 29% view maintaining their Chinese identity as somewhat important. They recognize its significance but prioritize it less than those who find it very important. They maintain connections through social media platforms like WeChat and TikTok.

South Korea: 25% find it somewhat important to maintain their South Korean identity. They practice the Korean language through exchange programs, classes, or speaking with family and friends, and stay connected via social media and legacy media.

Neutral

South Korea: 20% acknowledged the importance of their South Korean identity but did not prioritize it highly. They keep up with news and cultural trends but do not engage deeply in cultural practices.

China: 15% expressed neutrality about maintaining their Chinese identity. They do not actively preserve their cultural heritage and linguistic identity.

India: 14% expressed neutrality about maintaining their Indian identity. They engage moderately with social media and cultural events, occasionally following Indian politics and cultural happenings.

Not Very Important

South Korea: 9% found maintaining their South Korean identity not very important. They focus more on adapting to American culture and integrating into the local community.

China: 7% indicated that maintaining their Chinese identity is not very important. They focus on assimilating into American culture and do not actively engage in preserving their cultural heritage.

India: 6% indicated that maintaining their Indian identity is not very important. They have limited interest in social media connections and do not actively follow events in their home country.

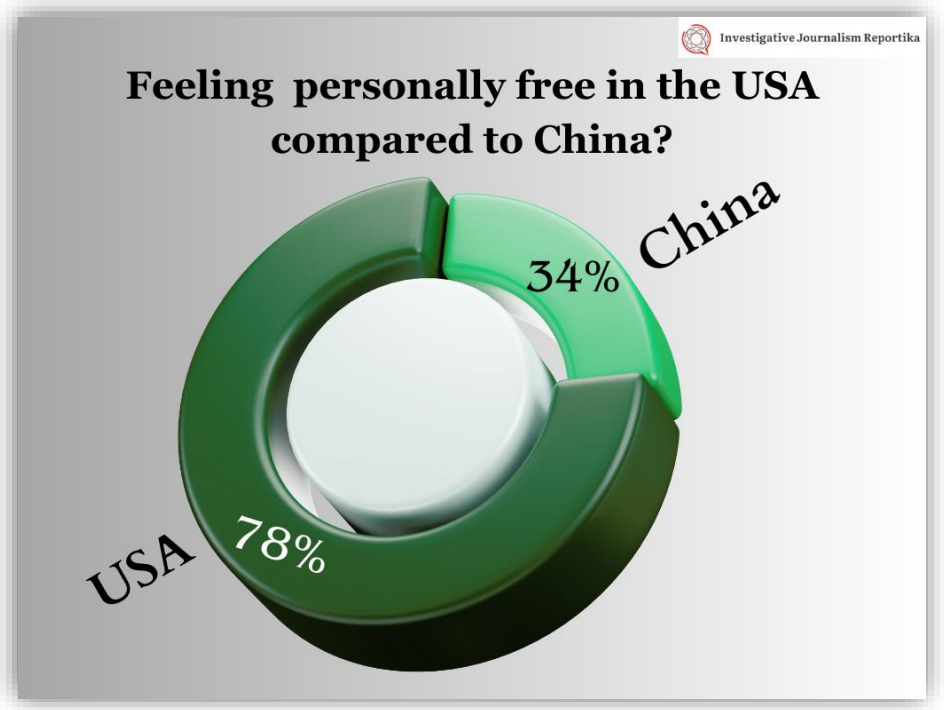
Not Important at All

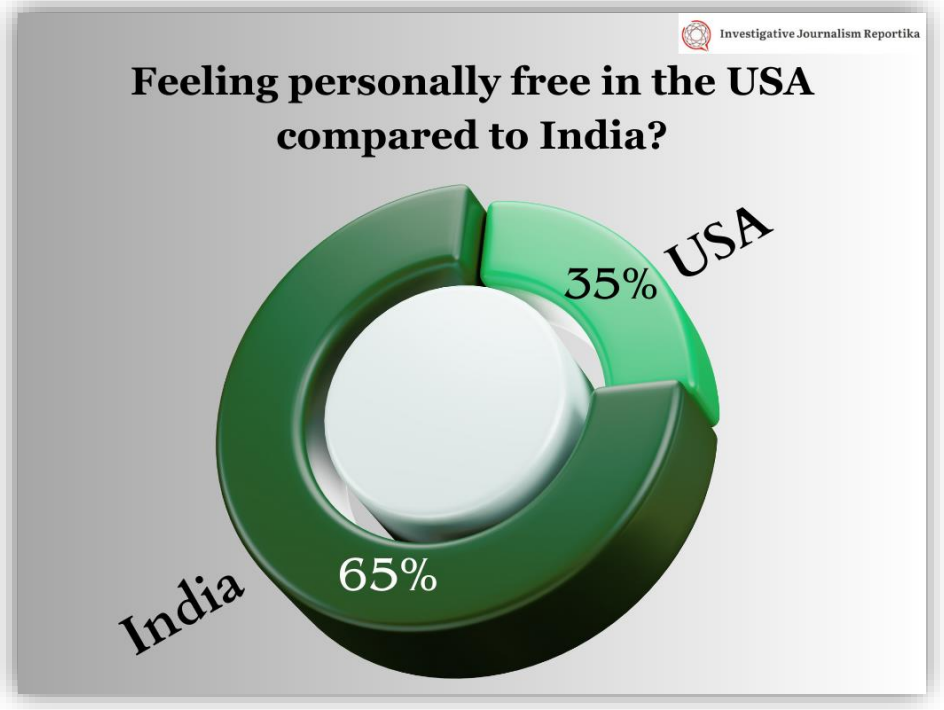
China: 8% stated that maintaining their Chinese identity is not important at all. They have fully embraced American culture and do not feel a strong attachment to their cultural heritage.

South Korea: 7% considered maintaining their South Korean identity not important at all. They prefer embracing a new identity in the USA and do not find cultural connections crucial to their sense of self or well-being.

India: 4% stated that maintaining their Indian identity is not important at all. They have fully assimilated into American culture, with minimal engagement in Indian cultural events or politics.

Q6: Do you feel more personally free in the USA compared to your home country?





USA has more freedom

China: 78% of students expressed feeling a greater sense of personal freedom in the USA compared to China. They cited freedom of expression, individual rights, and opportunities for self-determination as key reasons. Media and social media censorship in China were major factors for their preference.

South Korea: 37% of students felt more personally free in the USA. They cited the greater freedom of expression, where individuals can openly share their opinions without fear of social or legal repercussions. They appreciated the liberal atmosphere, which encourages diverse viewpoints and free speech, and the higher degree of personal autonomy in the USA.

India: 35% of students expressed feeling a greater sense of personal freedom in the USA compared to India. They pointed to freedom of expression, individual rights, and opportunities for self-determination as key reasons. Media and social media censorship in India were highlighted as significant factors.

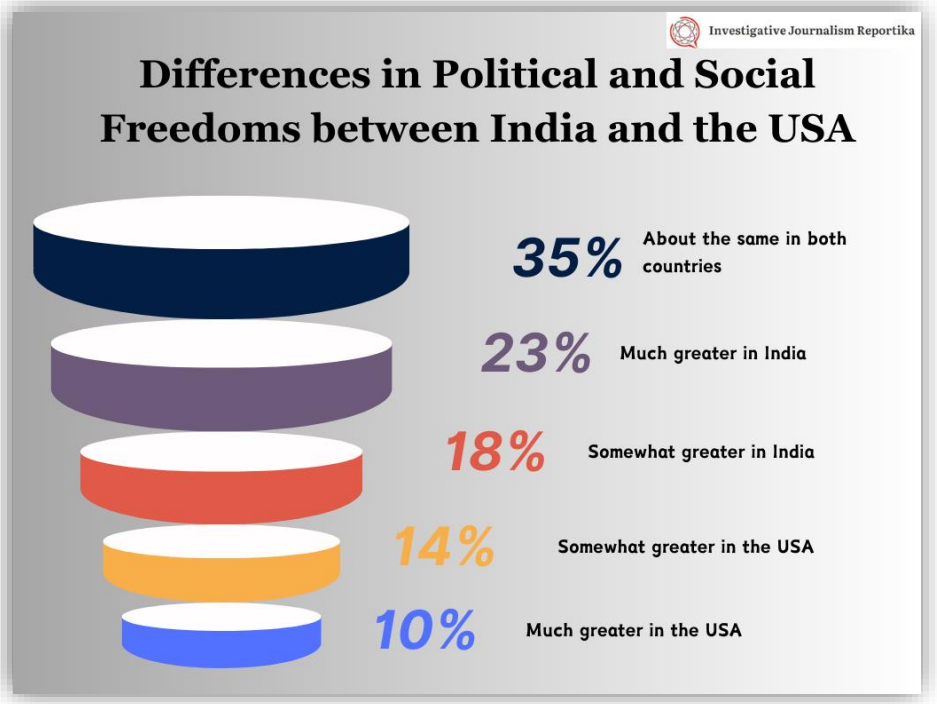
Home country has more freedom

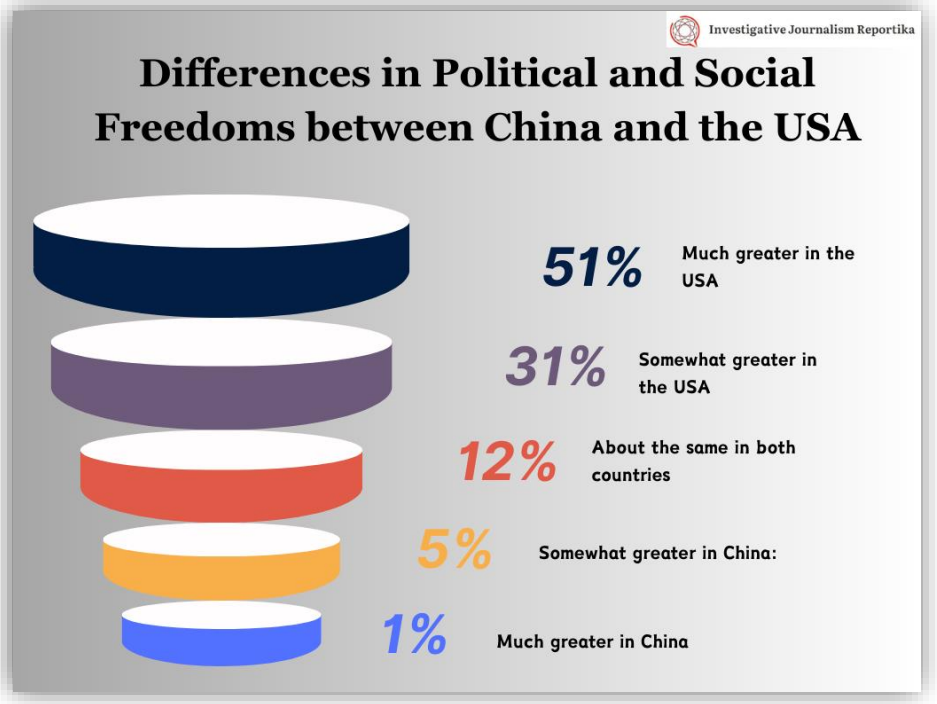
India: 65% of students indicated that they did not feel more personally free in the USA compared to India. They mentioned cultural familiarity, social support networks, and a sense of belonging as reasons for their preference for the perceived constraints of India.

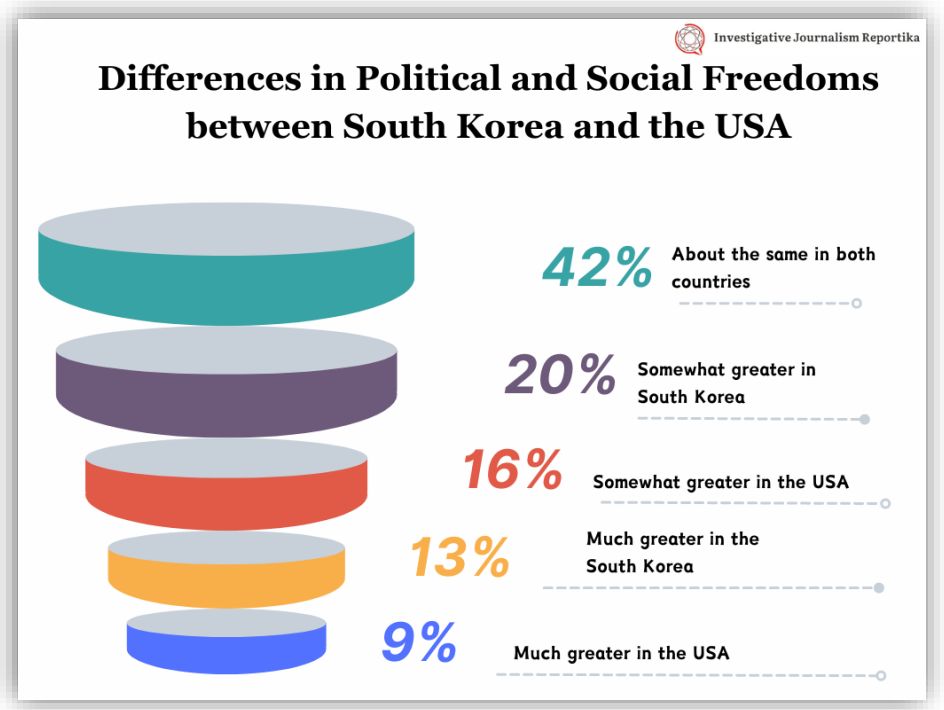
South Korea: 63% of students felt more personally free in South Korea. They highlighted the comfort of cultural familiarity and strong social support networks, which provided a sense of community and belonging. They also noted that South Korea's societal structure, despite being more conservative, provided a sense of order and cohesion, making them feel secure and supported. Lower crime rates and a rigorous, structured education and work environment were additional factors contributing to their sense of freedom in South Korea.

China: 22% of students indicated that they did not feel more personally free in the USA compared to China. They mentioned cultural familiarity, social support networks, and a sense of belonging as reasons for their preference for the perceived constraints of China.

Q7: How would you rate the differences in political and social freedoms between your home country and the USA based on your understanding?







Much Greater in the USA

China: 51% indicated that political and social freedoms are much greater in the USA. They cited the presence of censorship, surveillance, and the social credit system in China, which restricts freedom of speech and expression. Additionally, they appreciated the political freedoms enjoyed in the USA, such as the right to vote, freedom of speech, and access to diverse sources of information.

India: 10% believed that political and social freedoms are much greater in the USA. They cited factors such as the prevalent caste system, discrimination, lesser women's rights, and rising violence against women in India. They also raised concerns about the integrity of elections and LGBT rights in India.

South Korea: 9% emphasized the broader freedoms in the USA, highlighting more extensive freedom of speech, robust protection of individual rights, and a more open media environment compared to South Korea.

Somewhat Greater in the USA

China: 31% acknowledged that political and social freedoms are somewhat greater in the USA. They highlighted the democratic system allowing for diverse opinions without fear of reprisal and concerns about the non-cooperative nature of law enforcement in China.

South Korea: 16% noted that while both countries enjoy considerable freedoms, the USA offers slightly more leeway in terms of social movements, freedom of expression, and a less hierarchical societal structure.

India: 14% felt that political and social freedoms are somewhat greater in the USA. They mentioned issues such as the slow pace of police and judicial systems in India, fear of these systems, and corruption leading to inequality.

About the Same in Both Countries

South Korea: 42% felt that political and social freedoms are quite comparable. Both countries have strong democratic institutions, vibrant civil societies, and legal frameworks that protect individual freedoms.

India: 35% believed that political and social freedoms are about the same in both countries. They emphasized the democratic principles upheld by both nations and the protection of individual freedoms.

China: 12% viewed political and social freedoms as about the same in both countries. They noted that control is effectively in the hands of the rich and powerful in both, with differences in political transparency and accountability.

Somewhat Greater in Home Country

South Korea: 20% found South Korea to have somewhat greater freedoms, appreciating the high degree of social cohesion, community-focused values, and societal respect for education and public order.

India: 18% perceived that political and social freedoms are somewhat greater in India. They highlighted initiatives such as reservations for government jobs and electoral seats aimed at uplifting the downtrodden and poor in India.

China: 5% believed that political and social freedoms are somewhat greater in China. They pointed to rapid economic development facilitated by the one-party rule of the Communist Party of China (CPC) as evidence of political stability and progress.

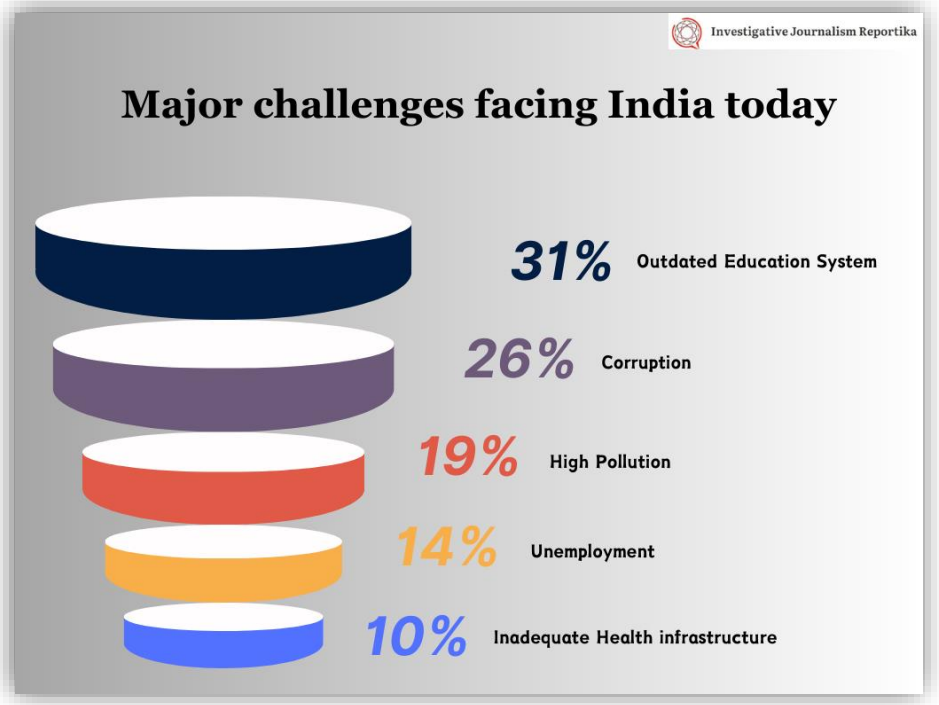
Much Greater in Home Country

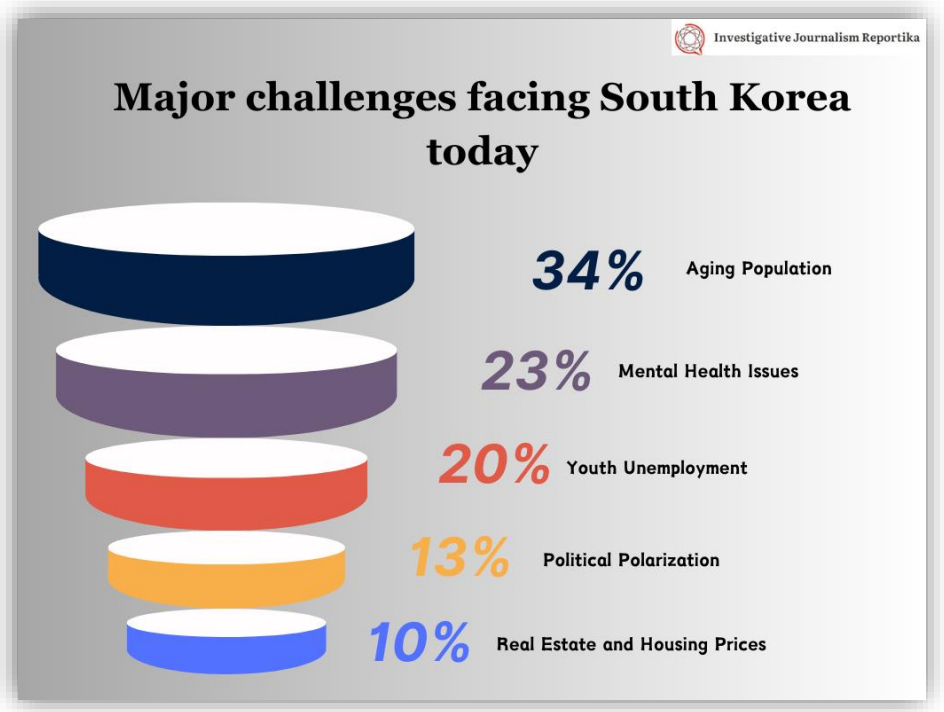
India: 23% believed that political and social freedoms are much greater in India. They pointed to various schemes targeting women and the downtrodden, the accessibility of the judicial system, and the strength of the Indian constitution. Concerns about racial discrimination in the USA were also noted.

South Korea: 13% highlighted aspects of South Korean society such as the emphasis on public safety, efficient governance, and a culture promoting individual responsibility and collective well-being. They also appreciated the sense of security and trust in public institutions in South Korea.

China: 1% felt that political and social freedoms are much greater in China compared to the USA. They highlighted the efficient implementation of policies by the Chinese government, leading to rapid economic development and progress in infrastructure and technology.

Q8: What do you see as the major challenges facing your home country today?





Challenges faced by China

Censorship: 38% identified censorship as a major challenge facing China, citing restrictions on freedom of speech and expression as impediments to open discourse and societal progress.

Dwindling Global Image: 20% students expressed concern about China's global image, which is often perceived as authoritarian and lacking in respect for human rights and democratic values. They noted the importance of improving China's international reputation to foster positive relationships with other nations.

Discontent Among Ethnic Groups: 17% students highlighted the discontent among ethnic minority groups such as Uyghurs and Tibetans, pointing to issues of cultural suppression, human rights abuses, and ethnic discrimination.

Rising Inequality: 14% students highlighted inequality as a significant challenge, citing disparities in wealth, access to education, healthcare, and opportunities between urban and rural areas, as well as among different socioeconomic groups.

Poor Work-life balance: 11% identified work-life balance as a major challenge facing China, pointing to long working hours, intense competition, and high levels of stress in the workplace as factors contributing to poor quality of life and mental health issues.

Challenges faced by India

Outdated Education System: The education system was identified as a critical challenge by 31% of respondents. They criticized the system for promoting rote learning, outdated teaching methods, and a lack of emphasis on innovation and critical thinking skills. Many called for reforms to make education more relevant, practical, and conducive to fostering creativity and problem-solving abilities among students.

Corruption: A significant portion of 26 % respondents cited corruption as a major challenge facing India. They expressed concerns about pervasive corruption in local government offices, including encounters with corrupt practices such as bribery, particularly with traffic police. However, many respondents noted a positive trend of decreasing corruption due to ongoing digital initiatives in India.

High Pollution: Pollution was identified as a pressing challenge, particularly in urban areas, by 19% of respondents. They highlighted the detrimental effects of pollution on public health, the environment, and overall quality of life, emphasizing the urgent need for measures to address air, water, and noise pollution.

Unemployment: Unemployment emerged as a significant concern among respondents, with 14% expressing worry about the lack of job opportunities in the country. Many cited under-employment as a common issue, where individuals are unable to find jobs that match their qualifications and skills, leading to frustration and economic instability.

Inadequate Health infrastructure: 10% respondents highlighted the inadequate health infrastructure in India as a major challenge. They expressed concerns about long waiting times in government hospitals and high costs of treatment in private healthcare facilities, making access to quality healthcare difficult for many individuals, especially those from lower-income backgrounds.

Challenges faced by South Korea

Aging Population: 34% mentioned South Korea's rapidly aging population is its biggest challenge. Respondents highlighted concerns about the increasing burden on the pension system, healthcare services, and the workforce shrinking as the elderly population grows. They stressed the need for policies to address these demographic changes, such as encouraging higher birth rates and implementing better support systems for the elderly.

Mental Health Issues: 23% participants raised concerns about the mental health crisis in South Korea. They pointed to high rates of stress, depression, and suicide, particularly among students and young adults. The respondents called for more comprehensive mental health services, increased awareness, and reduced stigma around seeking help for mental health issues.

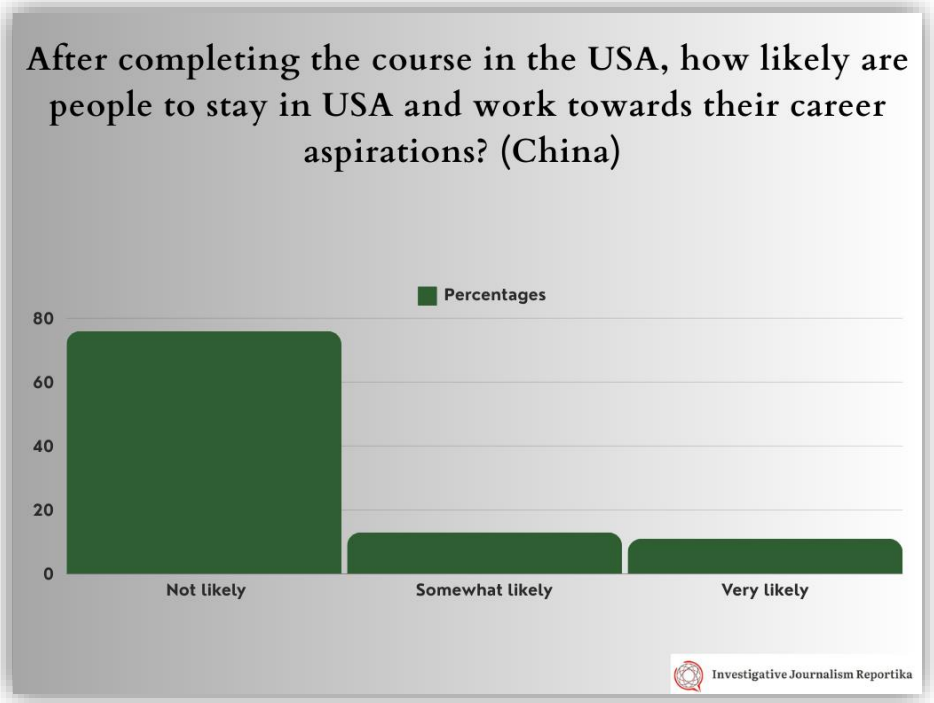
Youth Unemployment: 20% respondents pointed to the high youth unemployment rate as a pressing issue. They noted that despite South Korea's advanced economy, many young people struggle to find stable and well-paying jobs. This challenge is often attributed to the high level of competition in the job market and the mismatch between the education system and the needs of the labor market.

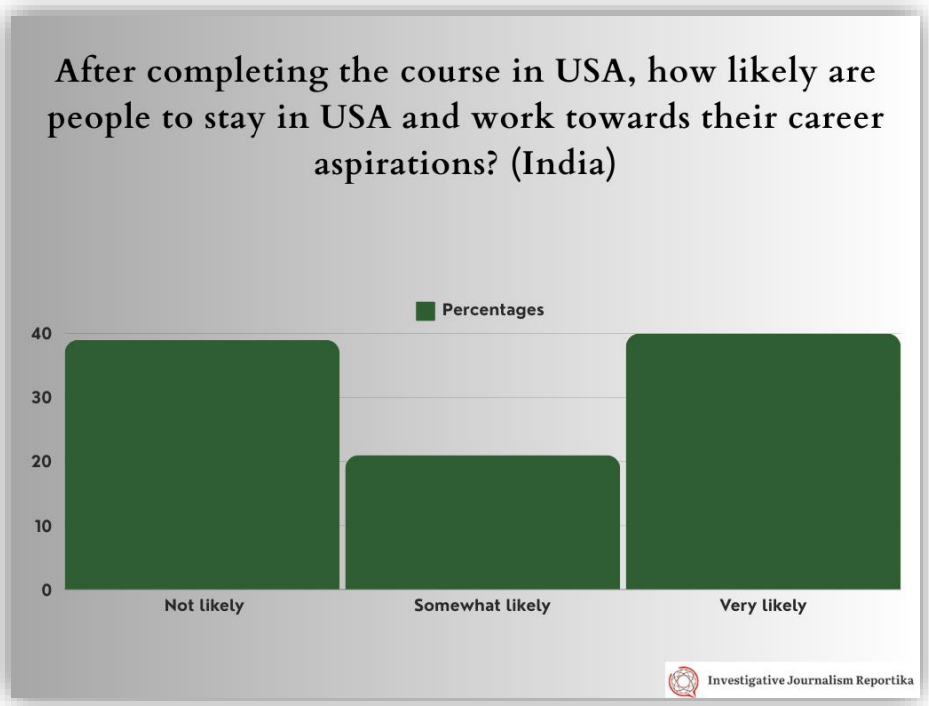
Political Polarization: 13% respondents mentioned the increasing political polarization in South Korea as a significant challenge. They observed that the political landscape has become more divided, which has led to social tensions and a lack of consensus on important national issues. They stressed the importance of fostering dialogue and cooperation across different political and social groups to ensure stable and effective governance.

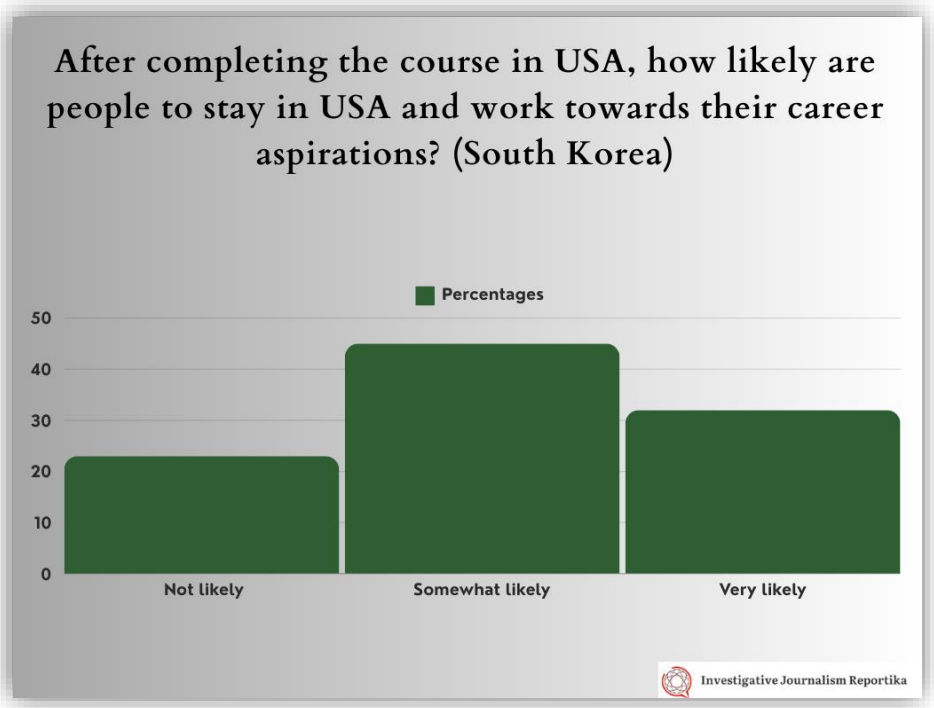
Real Estate and Housing Prices: 10% identified the soaring real estate and housing prices, particularly in major cities like Seoul. Respondents expressed concern about the affordability of housing for young

families and the impact of high property prices on social inequality. They emphasized the need for government intervention to stabilize the housing market and make home ownership more accessible.

Q9: After completing your course in the USA, how likely are you to stay in USA and work towards your career aspirations?







Very Likely

India: A significant portion of 40% respondents expressed a strong likelihood of staying in the USA to pursue their career aspirations. They were driven by a desire to contribute to the development of the USA, influenced by success stories of Indian CEOs who studied in the West and achieved prominence. Additionally, they felt a sense of gratitude for the opportunities provided by the USA and sought to maintain connections to their Indian roots through cultural practices.

South Korea: 32% students expressed a strong intention to stay in the USA after completing their studies. They cited reasons such as a sense of gratitude towards the country that provided them with educational opportunities, the desire to work for tech giants, and the potential for great professional exposure and career advancement in the USA.

China: 11% students expressed a strong likelihood of staying in the USA to pursue their career aspirations. They cited opportunities for growth, access to advanced technology, and a conducive work environment. These students highlighted their adjustment to the environment and culture of the USA, planning to work in places like Silicon Valley or join multinational corporations such as Google, Apple, or OpenAI.

Somewhat Likely

South Korea: A larger group of 45% students indicated a moderate likelihood of staying in the USA. This group included those who were undecided about their long-term plans and might consider returning to South Korea or relocating to another country. However, many in this category had adjusted well to life in the USA during their studies and might choose to settle there for convenience and familiarity.

India: 21% students indicated a moderate likelihood of staying in the USA for their career. They were considering options such as traveling the world, delaying their decision, or returning to India to work

for a US multinational company. These individuals were open to exploring various opportunities before committing to a specific career path.

China: A small portion of 13% respondents expressed moderate interest in staying in the USA for their careers. They valued job prospects, networking opportunities, and potential for professional growth. These students considered opportunities in European countries or Australia, traveling the world, or were undecided about their career paths.

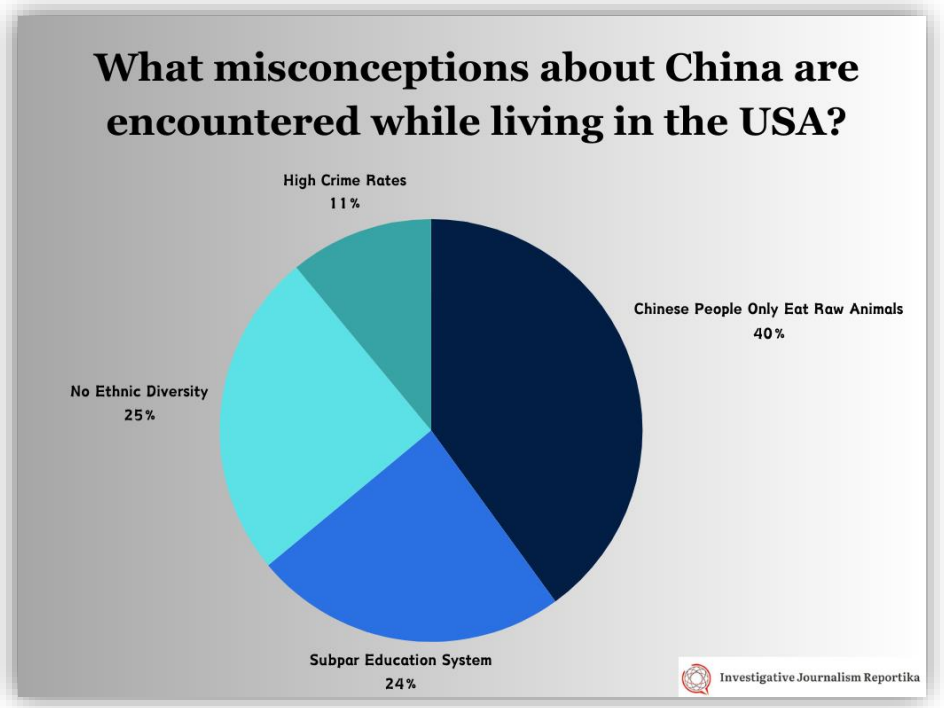
Not Likely

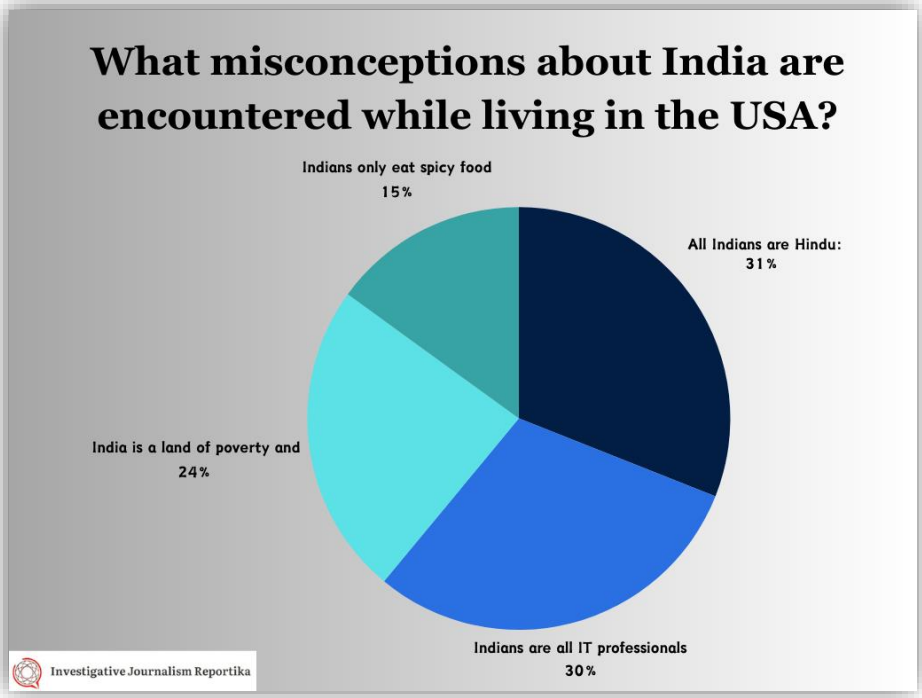
China: A significant majority of 76% expressed a desire to return to China and contribute to its development, viewing it as essential for China to become the world's leading economy. They believed their exposure to the USA would equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to advance China's ambitions.

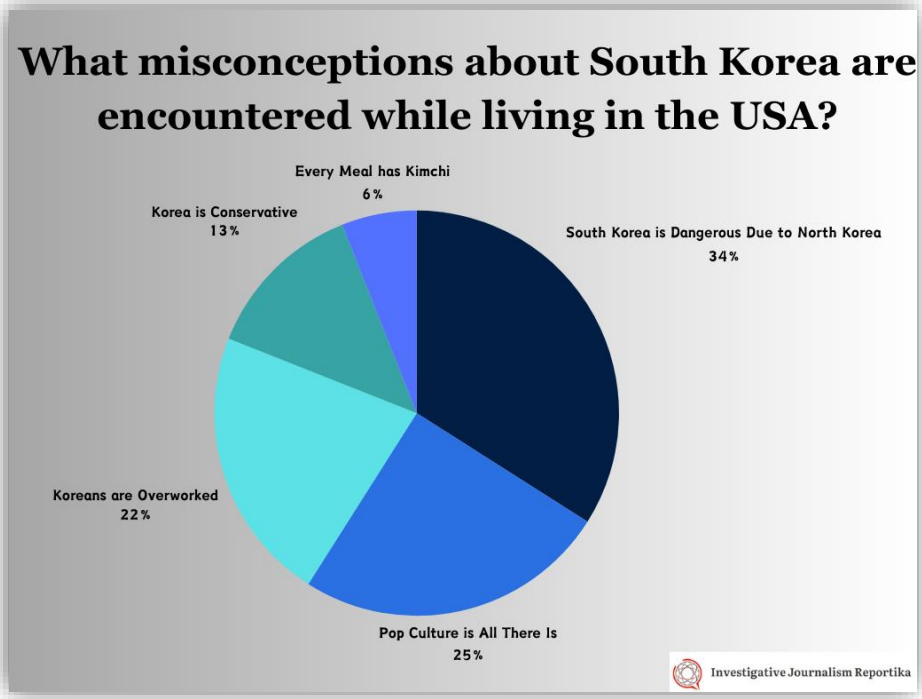
India: 39% respondents expressed little interest in staying in the USA for their career. Instead, they were inclined to return to India and contribute to its progress. They aspired to play a role in India's development from a developing nation to a developed one, perhaps by starting their own company or working in sectors that can drive economic growth and social development.

South Korea: 23% students indicated that they were not likely to stay in the USA after completing their studies. These students planned to return to South Korea to contribute to its development, apply their skills and knowledge gained abroad, and pursue career opportunities in their home country.

Q10: What misconceptions about your home country have you encountered while living in the USA?




What misconceptions about India are encountered while living in the USA?
Indians only eat spicy food
15%
All Indians are Hindu:
31%
India is a land of poverty and
24%
Indians are all IT professionals
30%
Investigative Journalism Reportika


What misconceptions about South Korea are encountered while living in the USA?
Every Meal has Kimchi
6%
Korea is Conservative
13%
South Korea is Dangerous Due to North Korea
34%
Koreans are Overworked
22%
Pop Culture is All There Is
25%
Investigative Journalism Reportika

Misconceptions about China

Chinese People Only Eat Raw Animals: 40% encountered misconceptions about Chinese people only eating raw animals. They clarified that Chinese cuisine is diverse and includes a wide range of cooked dishes, reflecting regional flavours and culinary traditions.

No Ethnic Diversity: 25% students encountered misconceptions about China being home to only one ethnic group, with little recognition of its diverse population. They emphasized the rich tapestry of ethnicities and cultures within China, including Han Chinese as the majority but also numerous minority groups.

Subpar Education System: 24% students encountered misconceptions about China having a subpar education system, with assumptions of lower academic standards and limited opportunities for intellectual growth. They emphasized the rigorous nature of education in China and the emphasis on academic excellence.

High Crime Rates: 11% students encountered misconceptions about crime rates in China, with assumptions of high levels of criminal activity and insecurity. They highlighted China's efforts in maintaining public safety and low crime rates in many areas.

Misconceptions about India

All Indians are Hindu: 31% students felt Many Americans wrongly assume that all Indians practice Hinduism, overlooking the religious diversity present in India, which includes significant populations of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and others.

Indians are all IT professionals: 30% students felt that there's a stereotype that all Indians are IT professionals or work in the tech industry. They clarified that while India has a significant presence in the global IT sector, its workforce is diverse, spanning various industries such as Agriculture, healthcare, finance, entertainment, and more.

India is a land of poverty and slums: 24% students felt that there's a misconception that India is uniformly impoverished and characterized by widespread slums. They highlighted that while poverty exists in India, there are also thriving urban centers, a growing middle class, and areas of affluence.

Indians only eat spicy food: 15% students felt that another common stereotype in USA about India is that all Indian cuisine is excessively spicy. They said while Indian cuisine is known for its flavorful spices, there's a wide variety of dishes with varying levels of spiciness, and not all Indian food is intensely spicy.

Misconceptions about South Korea

South Korea is Dangerous Due to North Korea: 34% students mentioned that Americans often confuse South Korea with North Korea, assuming that South Korea is a dangerous place due to its proximity and tense relationship with North Korea. This misconception overlooks the fact that South Korea is a developed, stable, and safe country.

Pop Culture is All There Is: 25% students encountered the stereotype that South Korean culture is solely defined by K-pop, K-dramas, and other entertainment exports. While these are significant aspects of modern South Korean culture, they don't encompass the country's rich history, diverse traditions, and multifaceted society.

Koreans are Overworked: 22% students noted that Americans often perceive South Koreans as being academically obsessed, and overworked. While the education system and work culture in South Korea are rigorous, this stereotype can overlook the balanced and fulfilling lives many South Koreans lead.

Korea is Conservative: 13% highlighted the misconception that while South Korea is technologically advanced, its daily life remains overly conservative. Students pointed out that South Korea is a dynamic country where modernity and tradition coexist, and many aspects of daily life are quite progressive.

Every Meal has Kimchi: 6% students mentioned that many Americans believe kimchi is a constant and mandatory part of every meal in South Korea. While kimchi is a staple in Korean cuisine, it is not the only food Koreans eat, and the cuisine is diverse and varied.

Conclusion

In an era characterized by globalization and cultural exchange, the experiences of international students provide invaluable insights into the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions, educational systems, and societal perceptions. This second installment of "The Survey Reportika," presented by the Investigative Journalism Reportika, offers a detailed analysis of the multifaceted experiences of students from China, India, and South Korea studying at universities across the United States.

The survey highlights key motivations for international students choosing the USA for higher education. Among Chinese students, 36% cite dissatisfaction with China's political system and restrictions on freedom. For Indian students, 34% are concerned about the rigidity and outdated nature of education system. Among South Korean students, 32% seek a global perspective and exposure to international cultures. These percentages underscore the perceived drawbacks of their home countries' systems and the benefits of studying in the USA.

The survey also reveals that 42% of Chinese students, 39% of Indian students, and 13% of South Korean students find the academic environment in the USA much better than in their home countries, highlighting greater academic freedom, diverse opportunities, and advanced resources in the USA.

The survey highlights varied perspectives on political and social freedoms among international students. For China, 51% of respondents find freedoms much greater in the USA due to censorship and surveillance in China. In comparison, 39% of Indian students believe the USA offers greater freedoms, citing discrimination and women's rights issues in India. For South Korea, 42% view freedoms as comparable between the two countries, but 29% see the USA as offering somewhat or much greater freedoms due to broader speech rights and a less hierarchical societal structure. Meanwhile, a notable 33% of Indian respondents believe political and social freedoms are greater in India, highlighting social schemes and constitutional protections.

The survey highlights the career aspirations of international students after completing their studies in the USA. Among Chinese students, 76% plan to return to China to contribute to its development, while 11% are very likely to stay in the USA for career opportunities in tech hubs like Silicon Valley. Indian students show a strong inclination to remain in the USA, with 40% very likely to stay, inspired by successful Indian CEOs in the West. However, 39% prefer to return to India to aid its progress. South Korean students are more moderate, with 32% very likely to stay in the USA, 45% somewhat likely, and 23% planning to return home to apply their skills.

In summation, the comprehensive survey captures the intricate tapestry of experiences and perspectives among international students studying in the USA. From motivations for pursuing higher education abroad to assessments of academic environments and considerations for post-graduation career paths, the survey provides valuable insights into the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions, educational aspirations, and societal contributions. It underscores the pivotal role of international education in

fostering global understanding, facilitating personal and professional growth, and driving socio-economic development worldwide. By shedding light on the complex interplay of individual aspirations, cultural influences, and global trends, the survey offers a rich foundation for informed discourse and strategic decision-making in the realms of education policy, international relations, and global workforce development.