

**“Just Say No”:
A Comparative Analysis of the Perspectives
of Marijuana Users in Japan and America**



Shannon Liuag, Tyrus Torres, William Wolfkiel

Advisors:

Dr. Dustin Wright

Dr. Shigeko Sekine

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- Significance of the Study
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Significance of the Study

Based on personal heritage and experiences while studying abroad, we were interested in what we perceive as a much stronger stigma of marijuana in Japan compared to America. In California attitudes towards marijuana are much more relaxed and have been since even before legalization in 2016. Because of this, though we were aware it is currently strictly illegal in Japan we were surprised at how deep and strong anti-marijuana attitudes were. We wanted to research into how and why these perceptions came to be, and what impact they have on society now in both Japan and America.

Research Questions

1. What are the general perceptions of marijuana use in Japan and America?
2. How do formal and informal education of marijuana affect the perceptions of marijuana use made in America and Japan?
3. How do general perceptions of marijuana socially impact marijuana users in Japan and America?

Research Background Outline

- American History: Pre-War on Drugs
- American History: Post-War on Drugs
- Japanese History: Pre-Reconstruction
- Japanese History: Post-Reconstruction
- American Education
- Japanese Education

Keywords

Cannabis : over arching term; referring to the cannabis plant itself.

Marijuana : used when referring cannabis as a drug.

Hemp : cannabis used for fiber production, for the use of clothing etc.

Spice, legal herbs : a synthetic cannibanoïd drug, legal in Japan, with a much higher potency than natural marijuana.

Hemp seed : seed of cannabis plant.

American History: Pre-War on Drugs

- Hemp cultivation has been present in the U.S from as early as the Jamestown settlement in 1611. (Grinspoon and Bakalar 1997)
- The laws enacted from the first legislative assemblies in Jamestown, based on instructions given from England, included a subset of mandates for the cultivation of a number of crops including hemp. (Henry, 1894)
- Medical research was also being performed as early as 1860 and there are even reports of successfully using cannabis to treat opiate and chronic addiction in 1889. (Mikuriya, 1969)
- Over time hemp started to become more closely associated with marijuana as a drug and perception shifted.
- Propaganda: the 1936 film *Reefer Madness* created public outcry for marijuana regulation, led to Marihuana Tax Act in 1937, which didn't ban marijuana but more strictly controlled its cultivation.

American History: Pre-War on Drugs 2

- In early 1900s, marijuana use was much less prevalent, it was heavily associated with Mexican migrants from migrant working groups, it traveled and was popularized in jazz communities which were predominantly black.
- American prejudices against these racial groups helped to further color their opinion of the drug.
- In 1916, Randolph Hearst, used the spread racist propaganda for a campaign against both marijuana and hemp, including statements such as “marijuana smoking Mexicans and African-Americans who would rape and disrespect whites,” or that “marijuana was the force behind the “voodoo-satanic” music called jazz”.
(Herer, 1993. Luginbuhl, 2001)
- According to the ACLU (2019), black Americans are at least 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white Americans and in New York, Latinos are four times for likely to be arrested despite there being no evidence of marijuana use by black Americans being any higher.

American History: Pre-War on Drugs 3

- From the 1960s to the early 1970s marijuana was associated with hippie and bohemian culture, there was a greatly increased rate of use which brought a temporary shift in opinion in higher approval.
- The Carter administration formally advocated for the legalization of marijuana in amounts up to an ounce in 1977.

(Musto, 1991)

American History: Post-War on Drugs

- Nixon administration, who first coined the term “War on Drugs” in 1971.
- However It wasn't until after the end of the Carter Administration, when President Reagan was inaugurated in 1981 that the War on Drugs really took flight.
- From early on in presidency Reagan made sure to separate himself from Carter as strongly against drugs in his presidential addresses.

(Hudak, 2016)

American History: Post-War on Drugs 2

- Nancy Reagan personally spearheaded numerous anti-drug education campaigns with strategic targeting of young Americans that was an extremely vital element in the war against drugs.
- In 1984 she coined the famous phrase “just say no” in an anti drug message campaign aimed at kids and teens (Hudak, 2016)
- From her campaign efforts the amount of Americans in favor of legalizing small amounts of marijuana dropped from 53 percent in 1980 to 27 percent in 1986 (Hudak, 2016)
- Those in favor of penalties for using marijuana rose from 43 percent to 67 percent, this change in attitude strongly correlated with the shift in attitude among high school students (Musto, 1991)

American History: Post-War on Drugs 3

- Under Reagan penalties against drug offenders increased, and mandatory minimum jail sentences heavily targeting drug offences were introduced in 1986.
- Due to this, “incarcerations on non violent drug charges increased from 50,000 in 1980 to over 400,000 by 1997 (and as of 2017 1,394,514)”.
- The president was also given the authority to create a new office specifically for increasing education and policies for the push against drugs. (Hudak, 2016)

American History: Post-War on Drugs 4

- In 1989 president Bush released a four-point plan for how he was going to combat drugs in the U.S which included an over 1 billion dollar budget for interceding operations in Latin America and openly stating his intention of utilizing U.S military.
- U.S anti-drug operations have spread into Colombia, Mexico, Honduras, Panama, and many other Latin American countries.
- This extension of the U.S anti-drug effort could also be considered as another contributing factor towards the gradual shift in faith of domestic drug policy efficacy.

(Hudak, 2016)

American History: Post-War on Drugs 5

- Marijuana is now legal in 33 states medicinally and 10 recreationally.
- This mirrors a growing percentage of the US being in favor of legalization of marijuana, with a Pew Research Center survey showing 62% of Americans in favor of legalization.
- Additionally, according to Gallup study, Americans who have tried marijuana have gone up from 4% in 1969 to 44% in 2013.
- However at the same time the U.S has the highest incarceration rate in the world with 1,632,921 arrests made in 2017 alone for drug offense. (Drug Policy Alliance, 2019)

Japanese History: Pre-Reconstruction

- Cannabis hemp is intertwined with Japanese culture and arrived on the Japanese Archipelago by 1000 BCE.
- During the Jomon (14000 BCE) and Yayoi (300 BCE) eras the use of cannabis focused on using the stalk of the cannabis plant to make fibre to produce everyday clothing, shoes, religious garments, religious paraphernalia, tools, and equipments.

(Shinozaki, 2014; Yamamoto, 1992; Yamamoto, 1990; Crawford, 2011)

- The common use of cannabis as a fibre would continue all the way until the end of World War II, and its use, as a drug, would not start until the late 19th century.

Japanese History: Pre-Reconstruction 2

- In the 1880's Indian Cannabis entered Japanese pharmaceutical studies, and as early as 1895 advertisements claiming [cannabis cigarettes] could cure and alleviate a myriad of medical conditions began to surface along with products using hemp seed oil for skin.

(Mainichi Shimbun, 1895)

- At the 1925 International Opium Conference Marijuana was designated as a narcotic and banned alongside opium and other substances.
- In the 1940's the Control Corporation, Tousei Kaisha, is formed and would control almost all production of resources for the war effort.
- By 1942, there were 23 different hemp manufacturing and distribution companies within the scope of the Control Corporation.

(Yamamoto, 1992)

(Osaka Mainichi Shimbun, 1942)

Japanese History: Post-Reconstruction

- The United States greatly influenced Japanese drug policy during Japan's reconstruction.
- Starting in 1946 the Narcotic Ministry of Health and Welfare formed a new division for narcotics control officers. (Nagahama, 1968)
- In 1948, the Cannabis Control Law was first introduced targeting hemp industry but also included personal possession. (Nagahama, 1968)
- Because hemp had been considered as a war material throughout the Second World War for its use as rope, parachute cords, and other such materials this can be seen as another facet of the U.S limiting the Japanese militaristic force as much as possible. (Nagahama, 1968)

Japanese History: Post-Reconstruction 2

- In 1963 Japan increased drug control funding and number of narcotic control officers, following this expansion the number of drug arrests were the highest on record. (Nagahama, 1968)
- Japanese drug enforcement still focused on methamphetamines and solvent abuse but after peaking in 1980's solvent arrests slowly declined and marijuana arrests eventually rose above solvent arrests in 2006. (Wada, 2011)
- Since the 2000's marijuana sales have been increasing, and currently new drug distribution methods have been using cellphones and the internet. (Uruiyama, 2008)
- Because government policies have been harsh towards the use of marijuana, users and distributors of marijuana have began seeking other drugs.

(Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference 2014)

Japanese History: Post-Reconstruction 3

- According to the World Health Organization 1.5% of Japanese are in favor of marijuana legalization.
- In Japan spice, or legal herbs, is commonly thought of as just another form of natural cannabis. (Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference, 2014)
- However because spice is significantly more potent than marijuana it is also more dangerous and in 2013 numerous vehicle accidents occurred from the use of spice. (J-Cast News 2014; 朝日新聞 2014)

American Education

- In 1983, in response to high youth drug abuse in Los Angeles, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education, D.A.R.E, was established.
- Due to a lack of drug curriculum available in schools at the time, D.A.R.E quickly took off and became a nationwide program. The program “emphasized teaching specific information about specific drugs and their negative effects.”
- In 1984, D.A.R.E. expanded its curriculum to middle-school and a high school curriculum was also officially introduced in 1989. (D.A.R.E, 2019)
- Following the founding of D.A.R.E First Lady Nancy Reagan incidental statement of “just say no” in 1984 sparked a national movement connecting both parent and student organizations for the campaign of drug education. (Hudak, 2016)

American Education 2

- 1986 Nancy Reagan helped establish anti-drug campaign targeting teens called the Partnership for Drug Free America (now the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids). (Hudak, 2016)
- All of these campaigns were threaded with misinformation about marijuana such as its role as a “gateway drug” leading to the use of harder more dangerous substances and it being highly addictive which isn’t supported in any kind of medical research, and in the case of addiction has been disproved by multiple studies. (Morgan and Zimmer, 1995)
- Studies have shown that both D.A.R.E and the “Just Say No” campaign, “have had little or no effect on youths’ choice to experiment with drugs or to abstain.” (Hudak, 2016)

Japanese Education

- Prior to the reconstruction period, education of cannabis was mainly focused on the horticulture of hemp, with textbooks describing how to grow and harvest hemp as a vocational skill. (Yamamoto, 1992)
- After WWII Japan's drug education was heavily influenced by the United States through the reconstruction causing anti-drug education to spread.
- In the 1960s rise in drug abuse called rise in action for drug education.
- In the 1970's Counsellors for Narcotic Addicts and Volunteers for the Prevention of Stimulant Abuse worked with local communities and municipal offices to better rehabilitate drug users, including the government program called "Daily Life Security", which provided stipends for living expenses. (Vaughn, 1995)

Japanese Education 2

- During 1987 Police worked with the National United Crime Prevention Association and the Stimulant Drug Prevention Center to produce anti-drug materials.
(Keisatsu Hakusho; 1987, Vaughn, 1995)
- In 1988 the Japanese slogan “Dame Zettai”, or “no, absolutely” the Japanese equivalent of America’s “Just say no” movement, first started following the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2008)
- Drug and Stimulant Abuse Prevention Center, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare over the next 30 years would go to schools and community events to distribute anti-drug information in hopes of preventing adolescent substance abuse.
(Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2008)

Methodology

Respondents: 120 American and Japanese :

- 60 Japanese
 - Users: 30 (22 male, 8 female)
 - Non-users: 30 (10 male, 20 female)
- 60 American
 - Users: 30 (9 male, 15 female, 6 other)
 - Non-users: 30 (2 male, 21 female, 7 other)

Online Survey (Google forms)

- [American user survey](#)
- [American non-user survey](#)
- [Japanese user survey](#)
- [Japanese non-user survey](#)

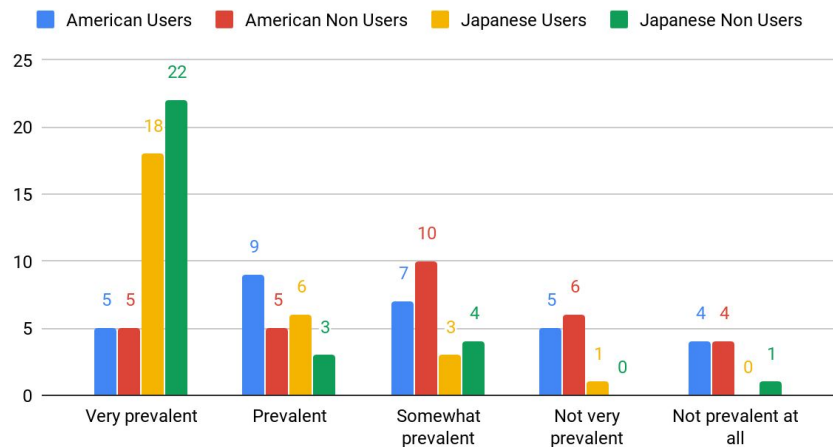
Survey Results

Research Question 1

**What are the general perceptions of marijuana use
in Japan and America?**

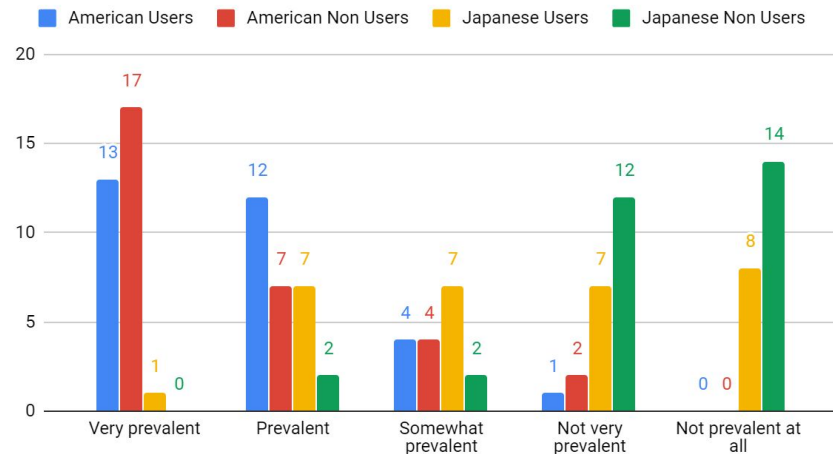
Marijuana User Stereotypes

[Dangerous]



Most Japanese respondents agree “dangerous” is a prevalent stereotype about marijuana users.

[Liberal]



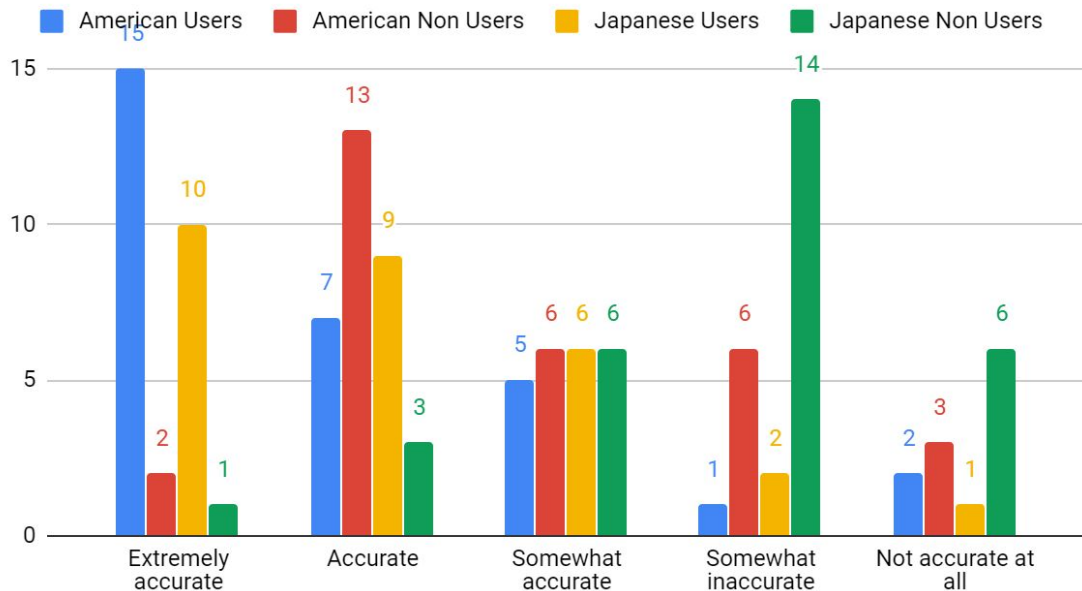
Most American respondents agree “liberal” is a prevalent stereotype about marijuana users.

Marijuana's Improved Sleep Effectiveness

Both American response groups and Japanese user respondents think marijuana can help improve sleep.

Japanese non-users do not believe that marijuana can be used to aid sleep.

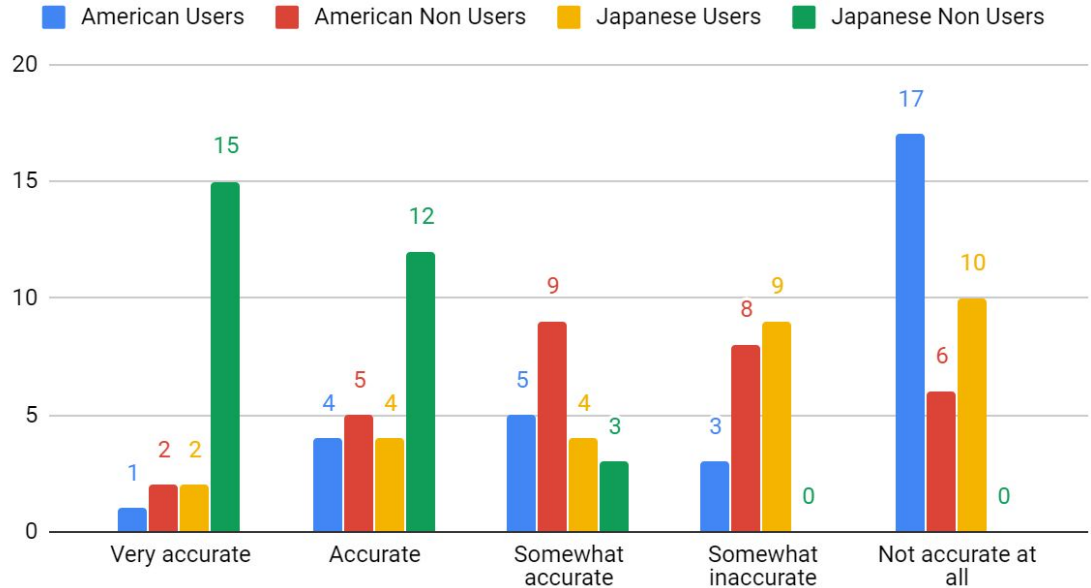
Improved Sleep



Perception Towards Marijuana Addictiveness

Both American response groups and Japanese users do not think that marijuana is addictive. Japanese non-users strongly believe that marijuana is highly addictive.

Addiction



Research Question 1 - Summary of Findings

- Both Japanese users and non-users agree that dangerous is a common stereotype about marijuana users. According to the Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference this could be because in Japan marijuana is often correlated to “spice”, the synthetic drug.
- From the counterculture movement during the 1960s the image towards marijuana became associated with liberalism. No such movement involving marijuana has occurred in Japan.
- Both American response groups and Japanese users think marijuana is not addictive but Japanese non-users believe it is highly addictive.

Survey Results 2

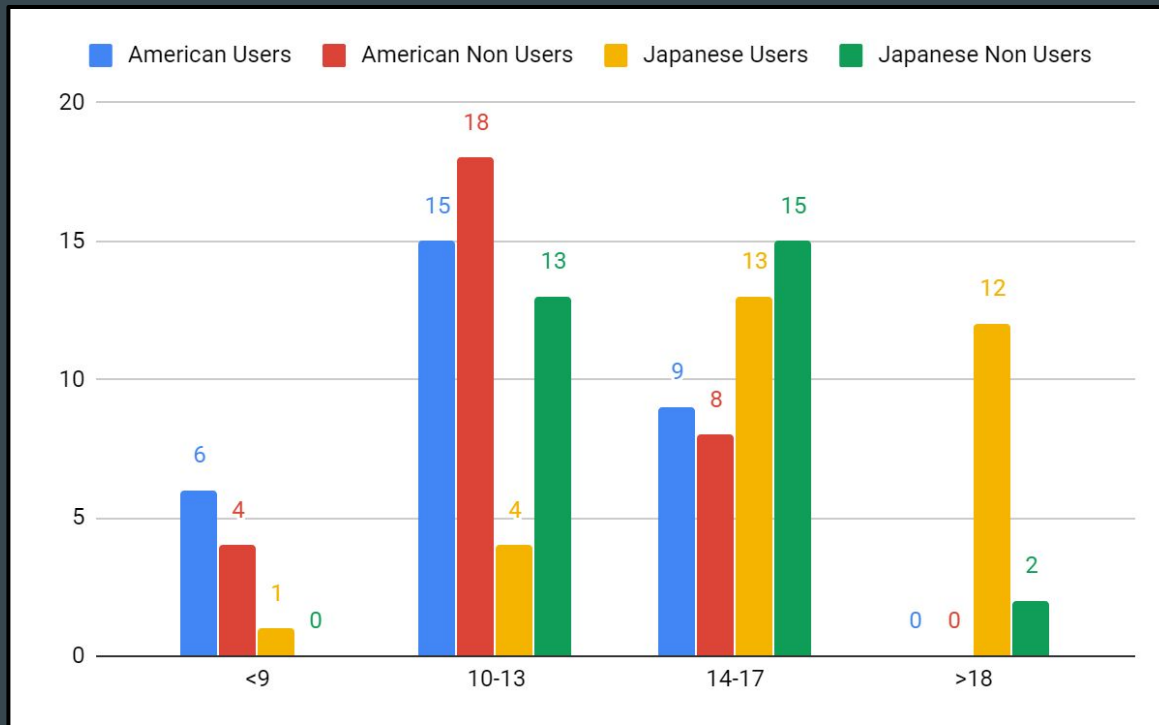
Research Question 2

How does formal and informal education of marijuana affect the perceptions of marijuana use made in America and Japan?

At what age did you first learn about marijuana?

93% of Japanese non-users first learned about marijuana under the age of 18.

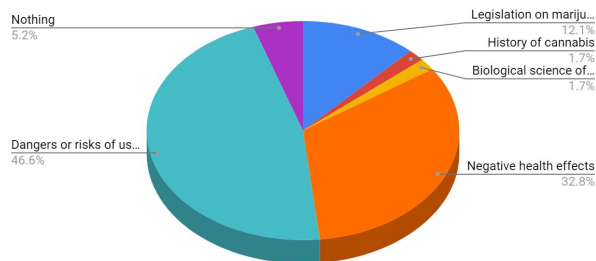
40% of Japanese users first learned over the age of 18.



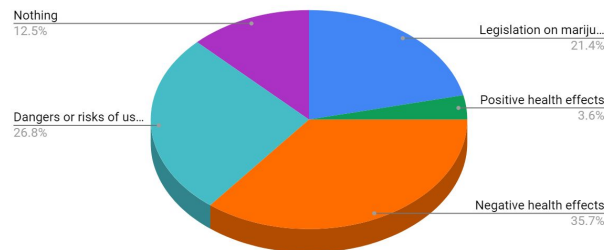
What was covered in your education in school regarding marijuana?

All four groups responded that the dangers and risks or using (light blue), and negative health effects (orange) were the most covered subjects taught in school concerning marijuana.

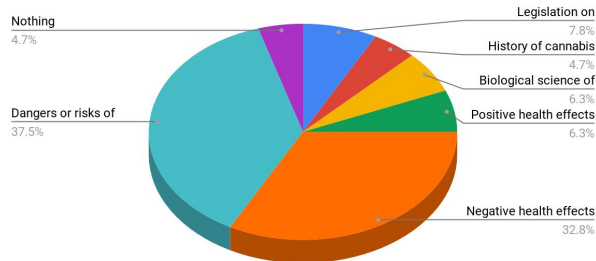
American Users



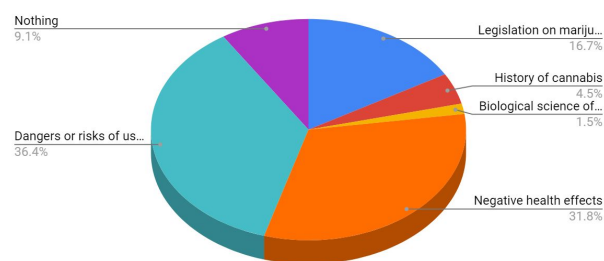
Japanese Users



American Non Users



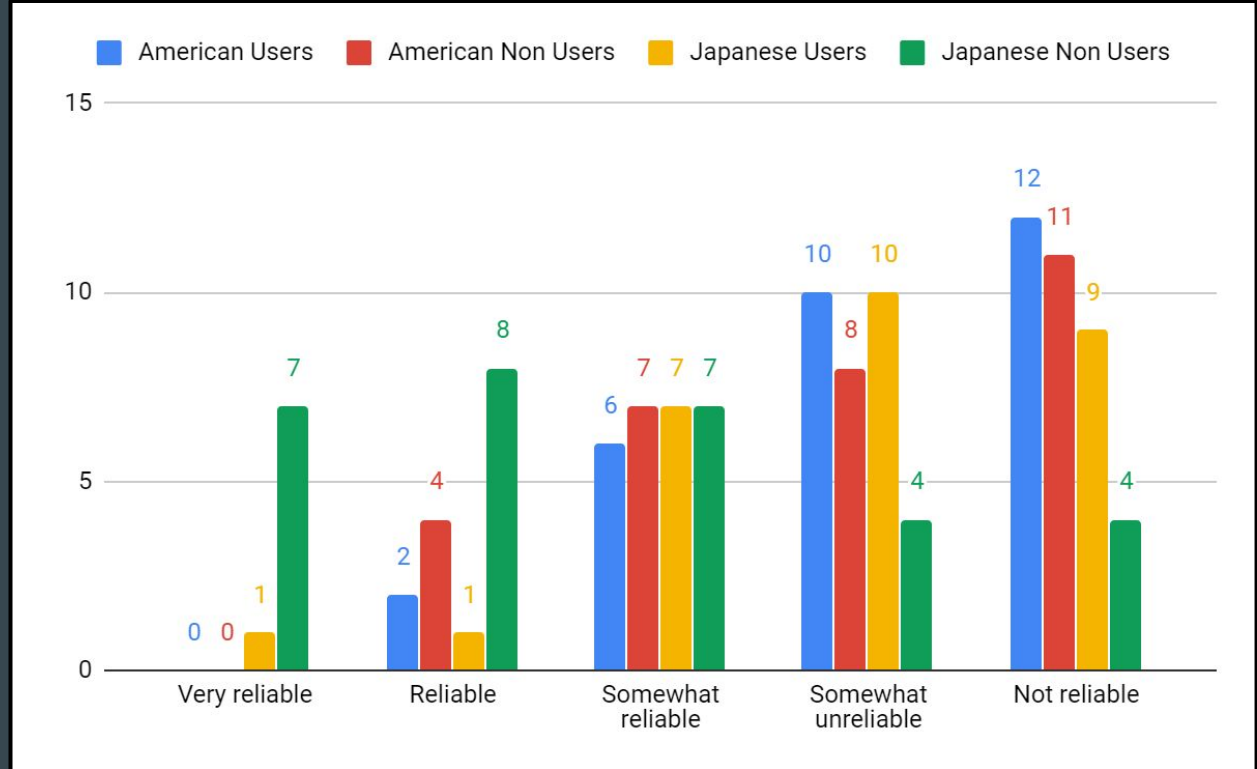
Japanese Non Users



How reliable was the education you received in school regarding marijuana?

Majority of American respondents and Japanese users don't think that the education they receive concerning marijuana was reliable.

Majority of Japanese non-users believe that the drug education they received in school was reliable.

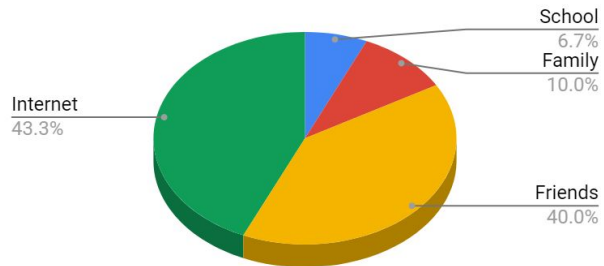


Largest source of knowledge concerning marijuana

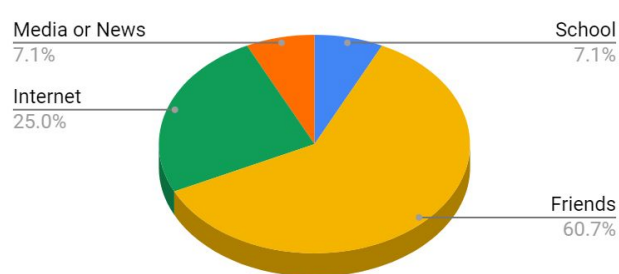
American respondents and Japanese users said they learned the most from either the internet (green) or friends (yellow).

Japanese non-users said they learned the most from either school (blue) or news and media (orange).

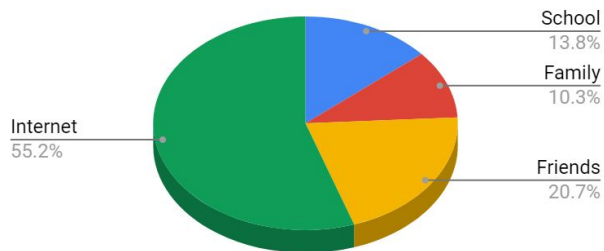
American Users



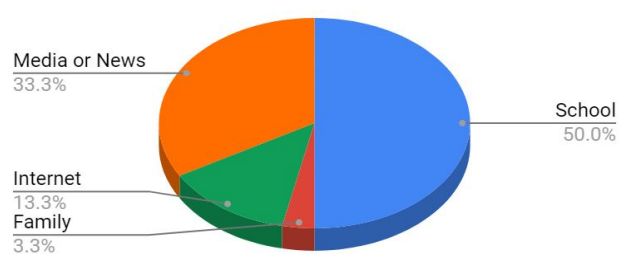
Japanese Users



American Non Users



Japanese Non Users



Research Question 2 - Summary of Findings

- Japanese users first learned about marijuana from an older age than non-users. From then it could be said that within the Japanese education system when you are taught earlier, probability of marijuana use goes down.
- All four groups said their schools mostly covered the danger of using marijuana and its negative health effects.
- Japanese non-users primarily learned about marijuana from school or news and media, however both American response groups and Japanese users primarily learned from friends and the internet.
- This shows the connections between the stark contrast of opinion between Japanese non-users and the other three respondent pools, and their education.

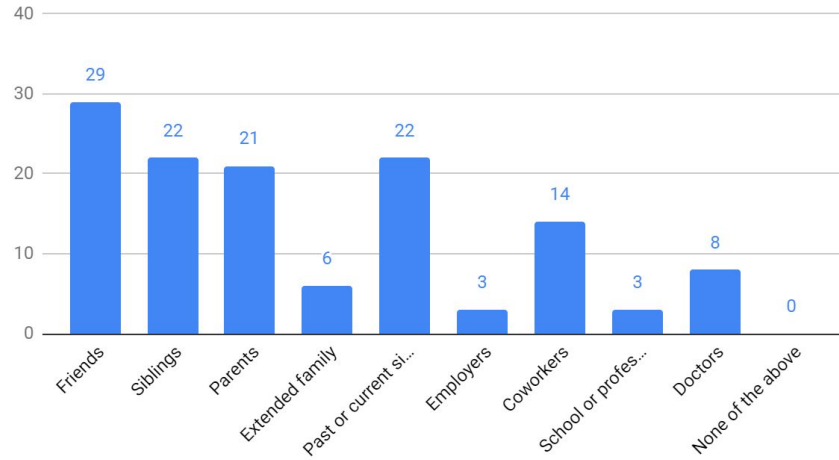
Survey Results

Research Question 3

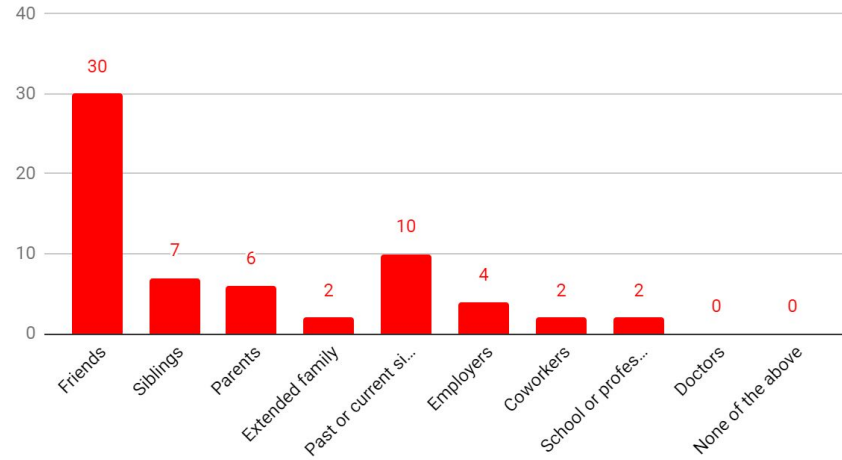
How do general perceptions of marijuana socially impact marijuana users in Japan and America?

Who knows about your marijuana use?

American Users



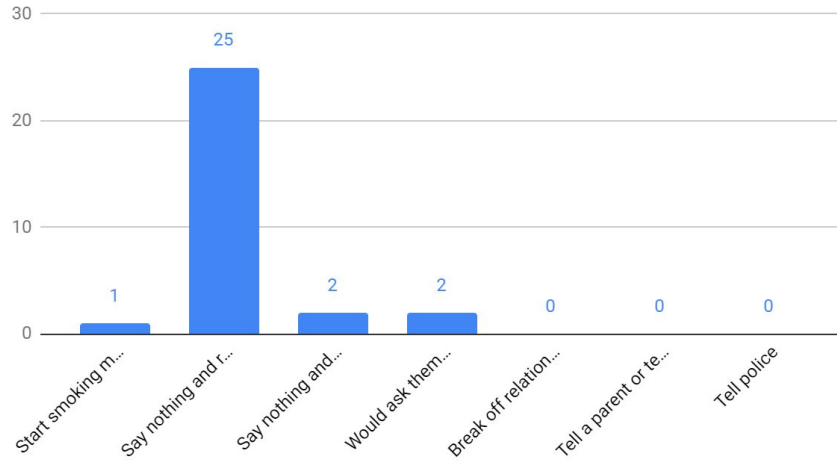
Japanese Users



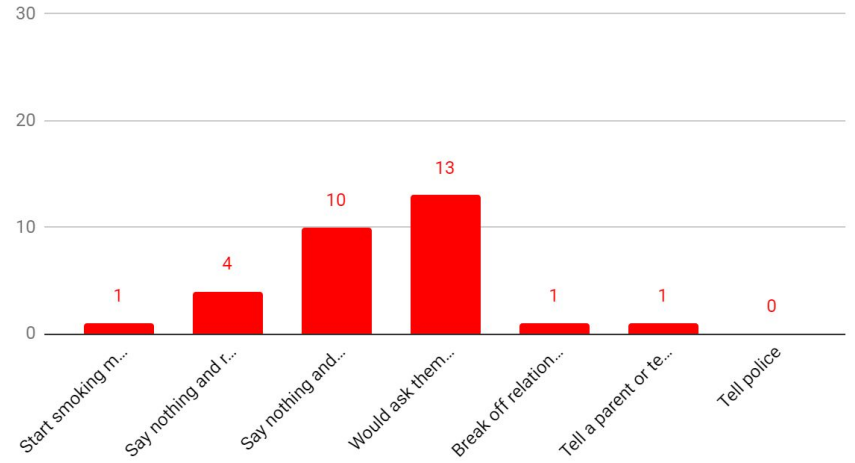
Compared with Japanese users, American users responded that more people around them know about their marijuana use.

If your friend was using marijuana, what would you do?

American Non Users



Japanese Non Users

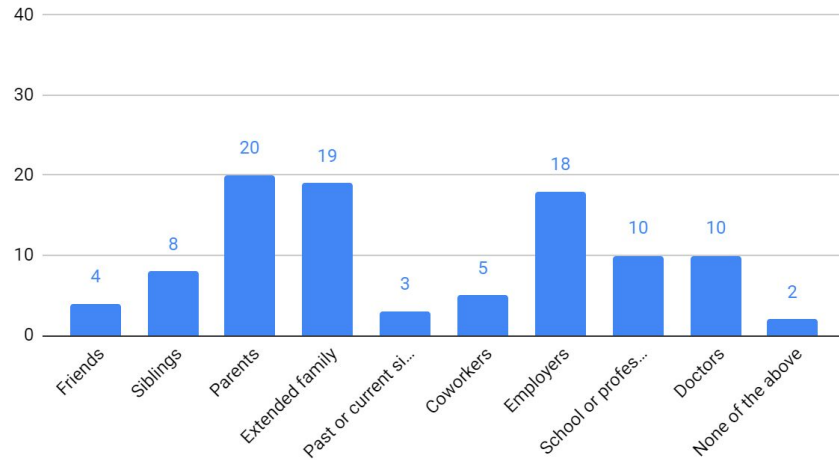


83% of American non-users said “say nothing and remain friends.”

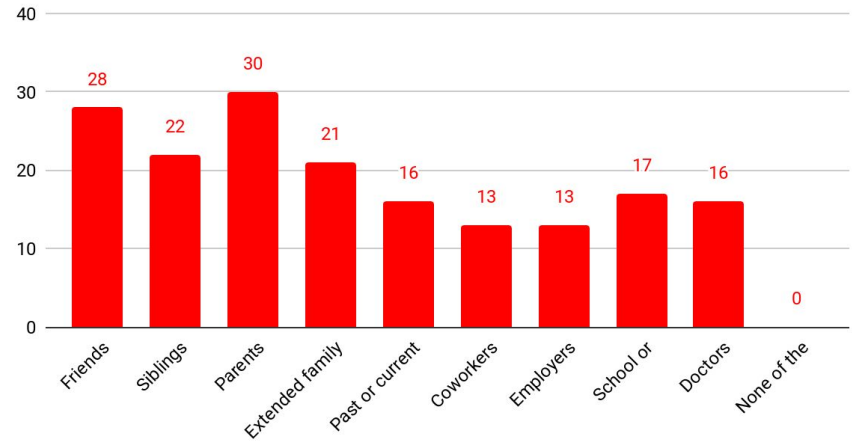
76% of Japanese non-users said “Say nothing and slowly create distance with them” or that they “would ask them to stop.”

If you used marijuana, who would disapprove?

American Non Users

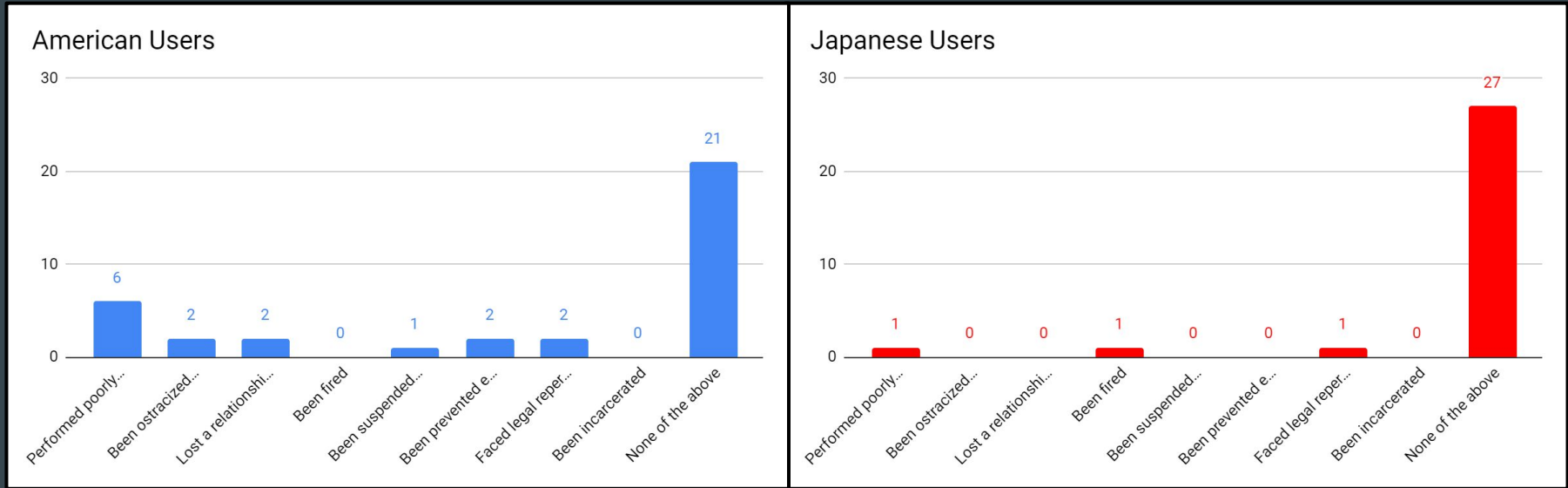


Japanese Non Users



If non-users were to use marijuana, Japanese respondents believe more people around them would disapprove than American.

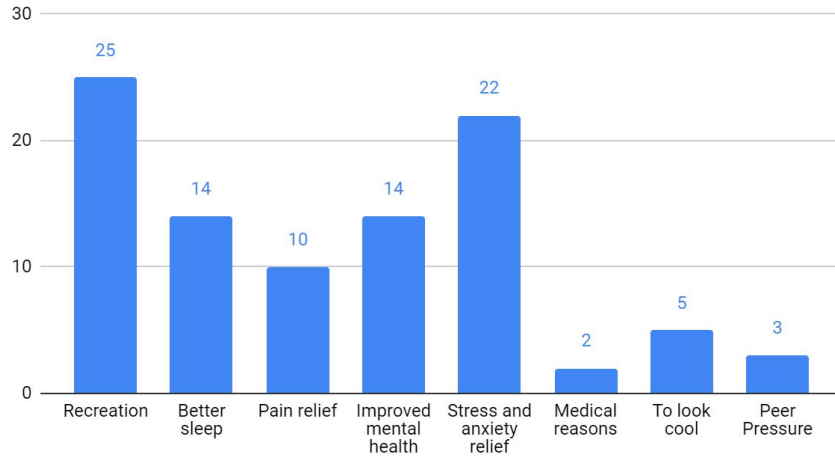
Negative social experiences from using marijuana



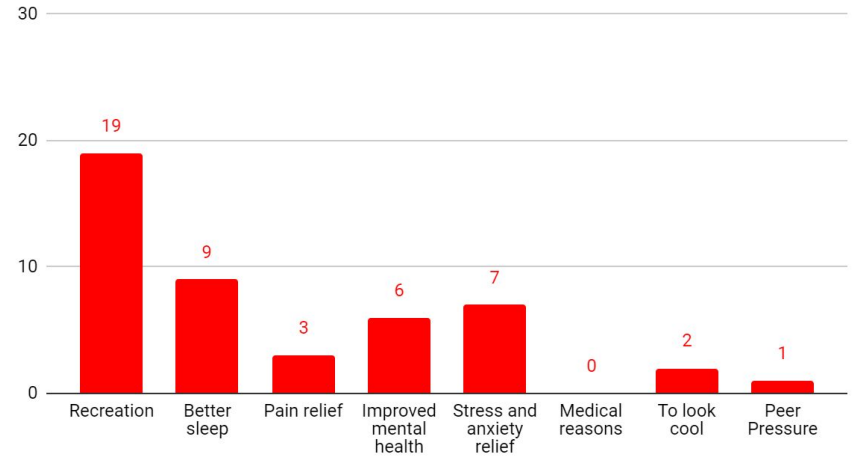
The majority of both Japanese and American users said they have not experienced any negative effects from marijuana use, however a small number of Americans said they had “Performed poorly in school or at work,” “lost a relationship” or “been prevented employment” etc.

Reason for using marijuana

American Users



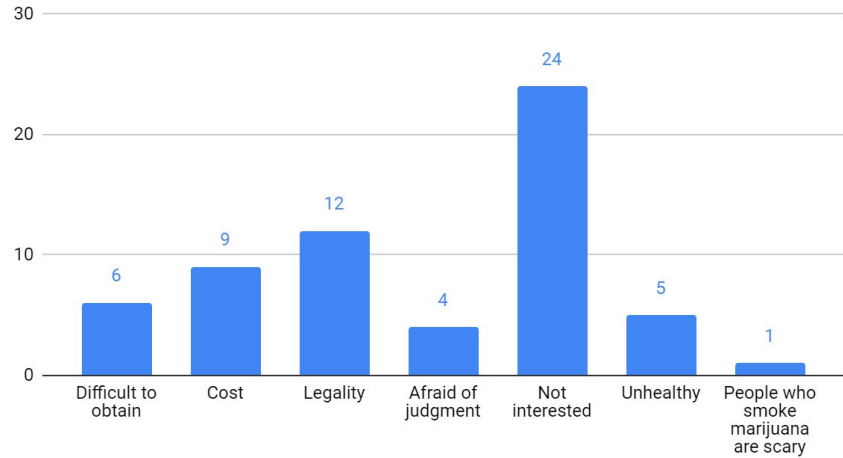
Japanese Users



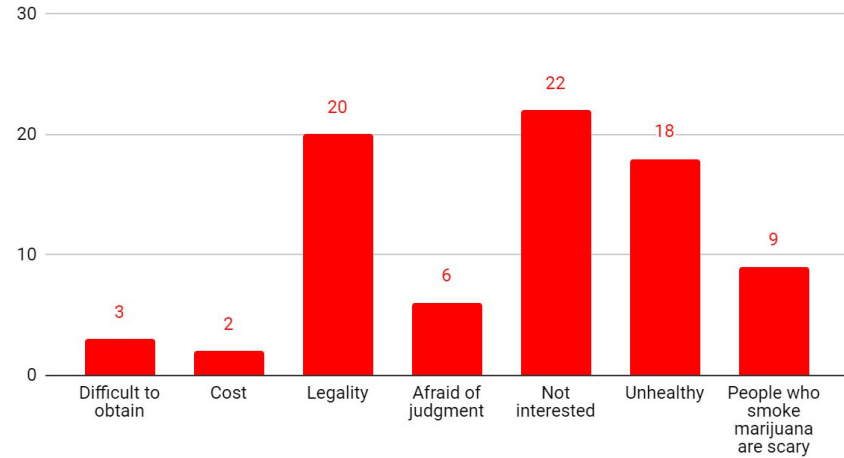
Two largest reasons for using marijuana given from American users was recreation, and stress or anxiety relief. Most common reason from Japanese users was recreation.

Reason for not using marijuana

American Non Users



Japanese Non Users



66% of Japanese non-users said their reason for not using was because of legality, but 60% said because it's unhealthy, while 73% said because they just weren't interested. The majority of American respondents said because they weren't interested.

Research Question 3 - Summary of Findings

- 66% of Japanese non-users said they didn't use marijuana because of legality. However just as many answered because it is unhealthy and even more that they just weren't interested. From this it can be said that law isn't the only contribution towards desire to use marijuana, but also perception and knowledge about marijuana.
- Majority of Japanese non-users said that if a friend used marijuana they would "Say nothing and slowly create distance with them" or "would ask them to stop."
- Additionally, compared to American non-users the number of people who would disapprove if they were to use marijuana was higher among Japanese non-users.
- From this you can say that Japanese marijuana users see a higher possibility of social consequence from marijuana use than Americans.

Conclusion

- In Japan marijuana is generally seen as dangerous and highly addictive. This could be because average Japanese citizens don't know the difference between "spice" and natural marijuana.
- 40% of American non-users said they didn't use marijuana because of legality. A large amount of Japanese non-users also said because of legality and large response rate of "because it unhealthy" is where the opinion differs.
- Japanese non-user learned most of what they know concerning marijuana from school or from news and media. However American respondents and Japanese users learned mostly from friends or the internet. This shows that the information available in immediate surroundings has a large effect on perception.
- Furthermore, that perception toward marijuana isn't shaped just by its legality but also where the information about marijuana is coming from.

Limitation of the study and future study

- Due to the high illegality of marijuana in Japan, collecting Japanese user responses proved difficult.
- The survey was taken down from three separate sites when trying to upload it to social media.
- Additionally, because Japanese users can be reluctant to take the survey due to fear of legal punishment.
- For a future study, looking deeper into the connection between Japanese perception of marijuana and their misunderstanding of it being spice could be worthwhile.

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