

## Immigration Policy: College Students' Perceptions in Japan & the U.S.

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### **Abstract**

Immigration policy is a constantly changing set of rules that controls and dictates who may enter a country and how. To immigrate to a country, a person must follow that country's set rules, voted for by its citizens. In America, the vote on immigration policies has become based on a battle between the country's ancestry of immigration and the consistent influx of immigrants from neighboring nations. For Japanese, immigration policy is not highly considered, keeping a closed door mindset that isolates Japan as a country of only Japanese ethnic citizens. I have found that college students from both America and Japan are influenced by a wide range of sources, but Americans stick more closely to source materials, such as official offices, while Japanese go to various sources. Both countries do not have immigration policy in their curriculums, but respondents mostly understood what immigrant information was, they generally did not know what the policies and programs were. Japanese and Americans are of a very different opinion when it comes to these policies though, taking a much different perspective with Americans being more socially aware of the impact of immigration policy.

### **Introduction**

Immigration policy is a constantly changing set of rules that controls and dictates who may enter a country and how. To immigrate to a country, a person must follow that country's set rules, voted for by its citizens. In America, the vote on immigration policies has become based on a battle between the country's ancestry of immigration and the consistent influx of immigrants from neighboring nations. For Japanese, immigration policy is not highly considered, keeping a closed door mindset that isolates Japan as a country of only Japanese ethnic citizens.

### **1. Significance of the Study**

While studying as an exchange student at Okayama University, I studied about immigration in Japan. During that time, I noticed that Immigration Policy continuously changes in both the United States and Japan. As a U.S. citizen, I have a vested interest in U.S. immigration policies as a social issue. I wanted to pursue what college students think about immigration policies that permit/refuse entry in the US and Japan.

## 2. Research Questions

1. How aware are college students of current immigration policies in the U.S. and Japan?
2. What are college students' opinions of immigration policies and what influences them?

## 3. Research Background

### 3.1 History of Immigration Policy I. (1700 – 1918)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the United States and Japan instated their first large scale immigration policies. In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry, on behalf of the United States, demanded that Japan open its borders for trade (Mallaby 1998). During this time, the United States instated its first ban on immigrants, illegalizing the importation of slaves (Immigration Before 1965). During World War I, waves of new immigrants entered both Japan and America (Mass Immigration and WWI; U.S. Immigration Before 1965). Japan brought in and encouraged immigration for heavy labor workers (Mass Immigration and WWI). The mass immigration to America led to new restrictions and processes required for entrance (U.S. Immigration Before 1965).

### 3.2 History of Immigration Policy II. (1939 – 1954)

During World War II, Japan and America implemented new immigration policies. In Japan, it was declared that foreign workers and their families living in Japan were “foreigners” not Japanese (Chung 2010; Yamanaka 1993). In America, this flood of immigrants led to the new naturalization laws, increased border control, finger printing authentication, and concentration camps (U.S. Immigration Before 1965). In 1952, after World War II, the Immigration Control Law was formed, based off US immigration law (日本法令外国語訳データベースシステム). In the United States in 1954, Operation Wetback illegally deported

Mexican migrant workers (Hernández 2006).

### 3.3 Current Immigration Policy I. (1960 – Present)

So what about the current immigration policy? In Japan, the “Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act” policy lists the standards that must be met to enter Japan as an immigrant or a refugee (日本法令外国語訳データベースシステム). In America, the “Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)” dictates the standards that must be met to enter the United States legally (DeSipio & Garza 2015; Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986). Both of these policies are the underlying basis of Immigration Policy. They are similar, as one took after the other, but they focus on different perspectives of immigrants that may or may not be permitted to enter

### 3.4 Current Immigration Policy II. (Visa Program)

Then there is the Visa Waiver Agreement. In Japan, the Visa Exemption Arrangement allows citizens from countries involved in this agreement to enter the country without a visa. The period during which a foreigner may enter and travel without a visa differs depending upon the country they are from. For example, Americans may enter Japan for up to 90 days without a visa, however Indonesians may only enter for up to 15 days, otherwise they must obtain a visa (日本法令外国語訳データベースシステム). In the United States, the Visa Waiver Program waves the requirement for a visa for any persons coming from a country with which the United States has agreed with (Chung, 2010; DeSipio & de la Garza, 2015).

### 3.5 Education on Immigration Policy

When it comes to education about immigration policy, both countries are lacking. In Japan, there are no discussions initiated on the topic and very little is taught about migration

(中学校 社会科のしおり 2013). It is similar in America, where very little is taught about immigration policy, rather it is discussed as a social issue (Pathways to America: Teaching about Immigration; An Educator's Guide to the Immigration Debate). The Immigration Policy Center makes materials available for teaching, which teachers can choose to use (Lesson Plans).

### 3.6 Sources of Influence I. (News and Family)

So how are opinions of immigrants and immigration policy formed? In Japan and America, the news currently discusses immigration policies, as a source for people to understand what is going on and what opinions exist. For Japan, immigration increases the workforce, but it takes jobs from native Japanese, it diversifies the country, but Japan is known as a country for Japanese people, and it has tourism and economic benefits (Imamura 1990). In America, news is discussing the topic of building a wall along the border shared with Mexico, and whether Syrian refugees should be permitted to enter or not (Hoffman 2012). People are also influenced by family opinions, but in Japan, family does not discuss political issues and immigration, but many American households tend to discuss topics such as social issues (Hoffman 2012).

### 3.7 Sources of Influence II. (Social Networking and Peers)

Social Networks play a role in influencing opinion on immigration policy as well. Social network connects people from all over the world easily, and so it becomes easy to share opinions and ideas. Take the use of the hashtag, it is often applied to social issues, spreading awareness throughout the world. This concept seems to be more popular and thriving in the United States than in Japan. In social networking, there is also peer pressure; it seems that comradery is strengthened through having a shared opinion. Except in Academic circles, peers do not talk often if at all about Immigration Policy and their opinions (Social Networking Fact

Sheet; Today's Top Headline: 111 Million Americans go on the Web for Daily News 2013).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Research Participants

In this research, there were 66 participants; 27 participants were American college students and 39 participants were Japanese college students.

### 4.2 Research Tools

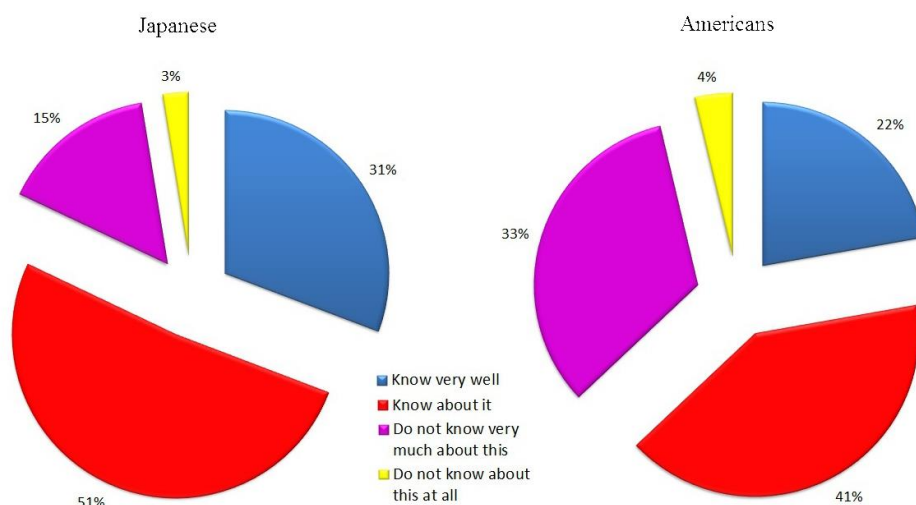
Utilizing a google form, a survey was used in English and Japanese.

## 5. Findings

5.1 Research Question 1: How aware are college students of current immigration policies in the U.S. and Japan?

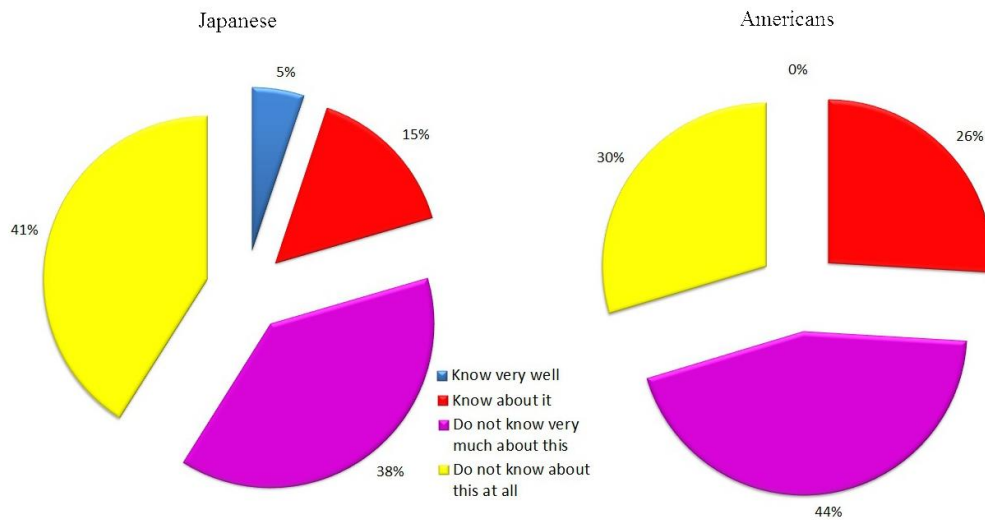
5.2 Knowing about the exemption and policy

Figure 1: The difference between immigrants, refugees and asylees



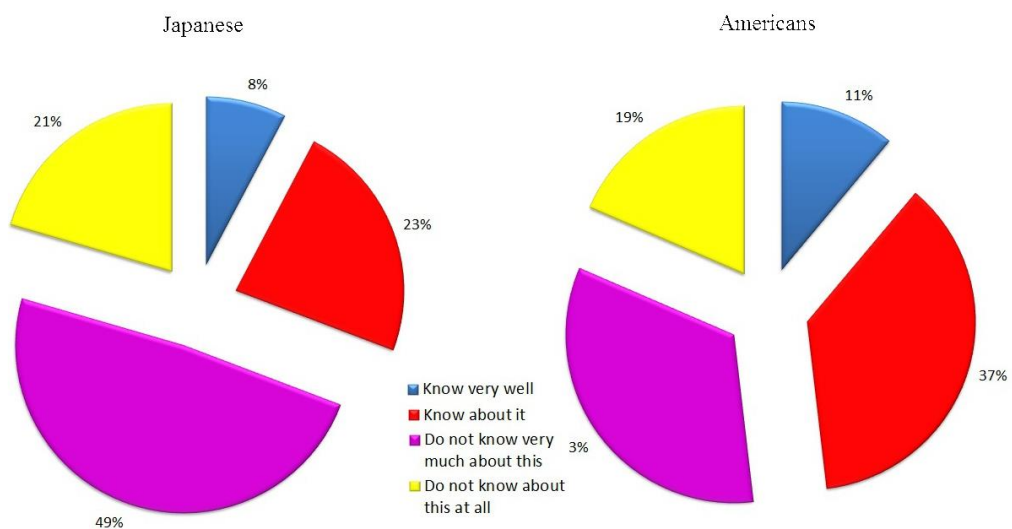
In figure 1, you can see that 82% of Japanese and 63% of Americans answered that they know “the difference between immigrant, refugee and asylee.”

Figure 2 : Immigration and Control Act



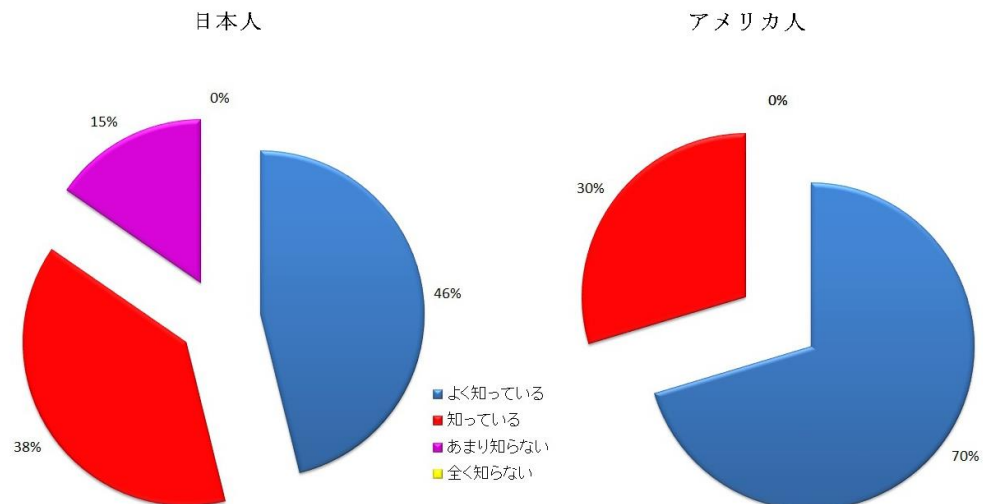
In figure 2, you can see that 20% of Japanese and 26% of Americans answered that they know about “Immigration and Control Act.”

Figure 3 : Visa Waiver Program



When asked about the “Visa Waiver Program,” 31% of Japanese participants and 48% of American Participants said that they knew about it (See Figure 3).

Figure 4 : Visa



When asked about a Visa, all of the American participants stated that they know what it is and what it does, but 15% of Japanese participants said that they did not know so much about it (See Figure 4).

### 5.3 Findings Summary for Research Question 1

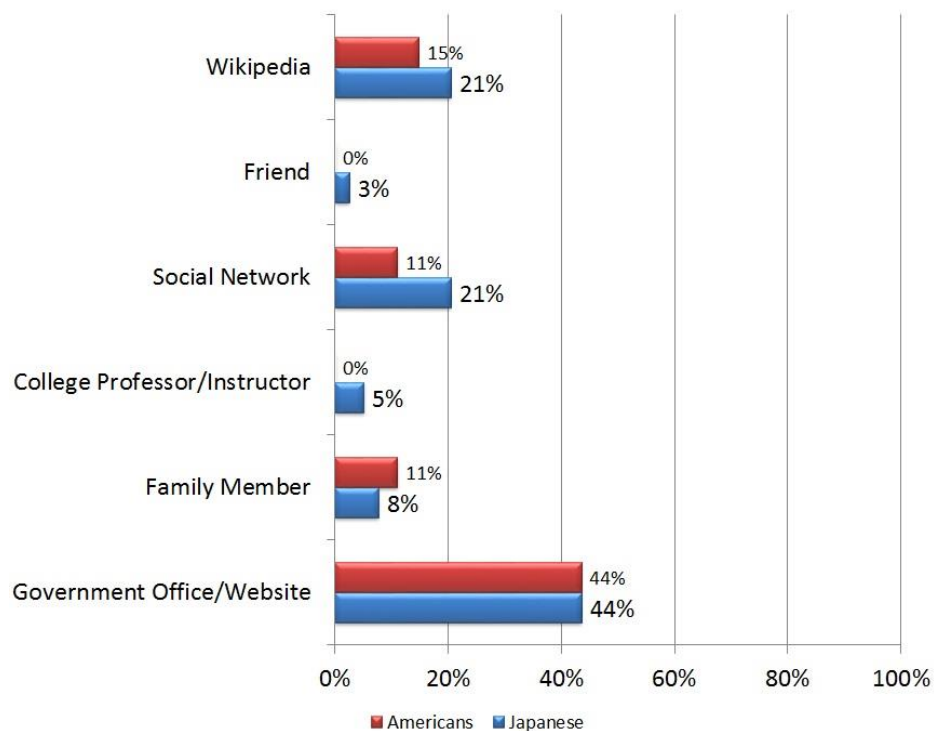
Here is the summary of what I have found out about Research Question 1. The majority of Japanese students know the difference among immigrants, refugees and asylees. The Americans who said they know the differences are about 20% lower than Japanese. Respondents are unaware of the policies and laws, and what they require of immigrants to enter the country.

5.4 Research Question 2: What are college students' opinions of immigration policies and what influences them?

### 5.5 College Students' Opinions and Influences

When asked about where they would go to first for a question about immigration policy, both Japanese and American respondents said that they would go to a government office or website (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 : When you have a question

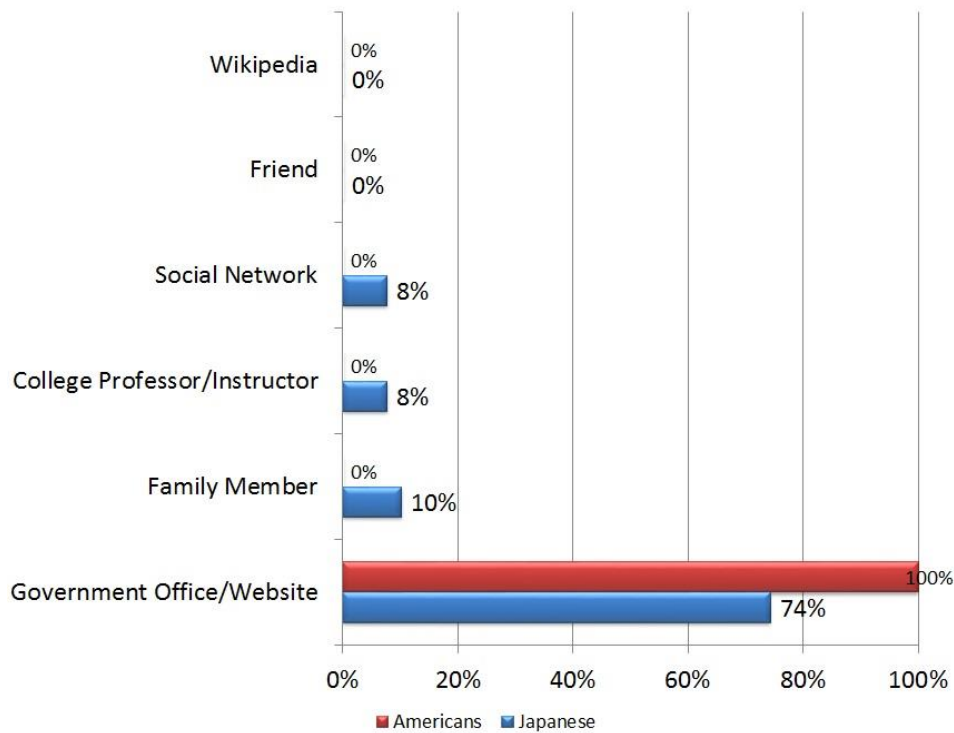


Participants were asked, “A friend wants to immigrate to your country. You want to help them find out information. Where would you go to or who would you talk to first?” and all of the American Participants said that they would go to a government office or website. 74% of



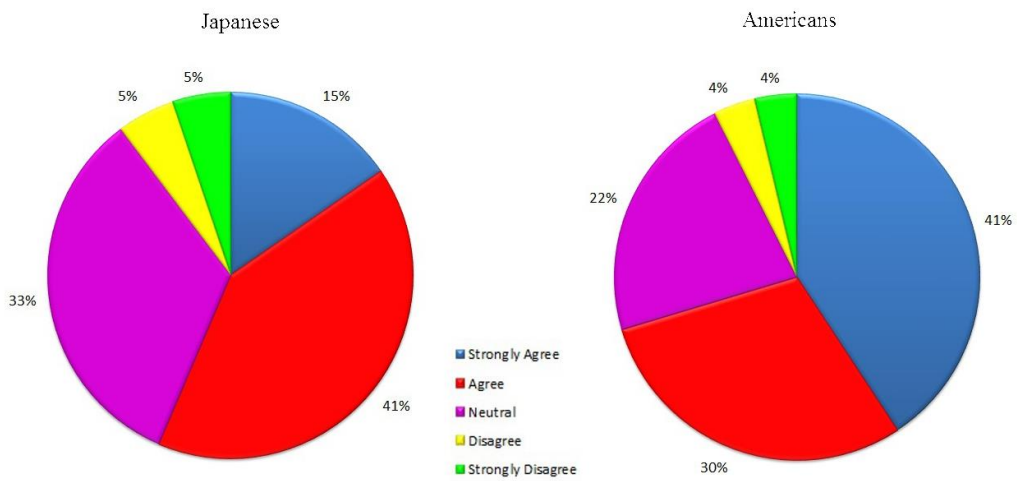
Japanese participants said they would go to a government office or website, but some said they would go to a social network or a college instructor or professor first to ask questions (See Figure 6).

Figure 6 : A friend wants to immigrate to your country, where do you go first for information?



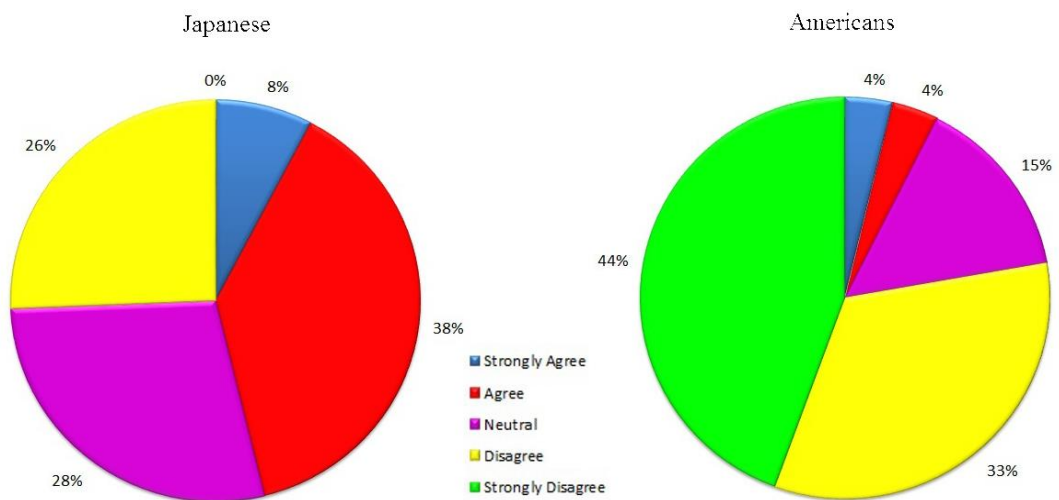
In figure 7 are the results of asking participants if they believe that immigration policy in their country should focus on “Increasing the workforce” or not. 71% of Americans said that they agreed, but 56% of Japanese agreed, leaving a wide margin between the two groups in their opinion.

Figure 7 : Increasing the workforce



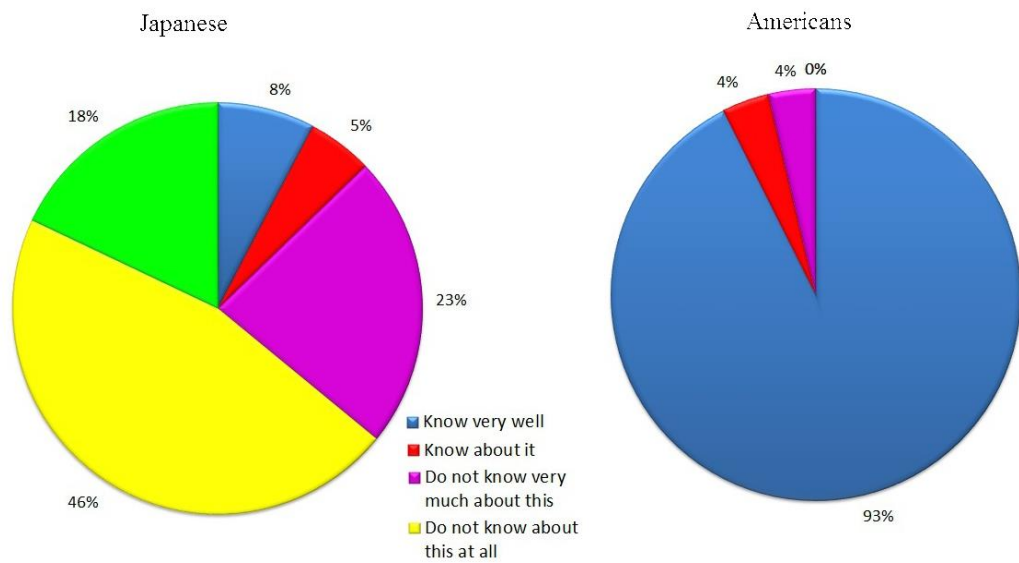
When asked about their opinion of immigration policy focusing on whether “Numbers of immigrants from certain countries should be limited,” 26% of Japanese participants and 77% of American participants said that this should not be a focus of immigration policy (See Figure 8). More Japanese were neutral on this issue than American participants.

Figure 8 : Numbers of immigrants should be limited



The majority of Americans, 97% to be exact, said that they agreed that immigration policy should focus on not rejecting immigrants based on religious background, but only 13% of Japanese participants felt the same, revealing a reverse opinion (See Figure 9).

Figure 9 : Not rejecting immigrants based on religious background



When asked about where they learned the most about immigration policy, Japanese picked news sources, second choice being college instructor or professor; American participants responded with news, family, college instructor or professor and social networks (See Figure 10).

Figure 10 : Where students have learned the most about immigration policy

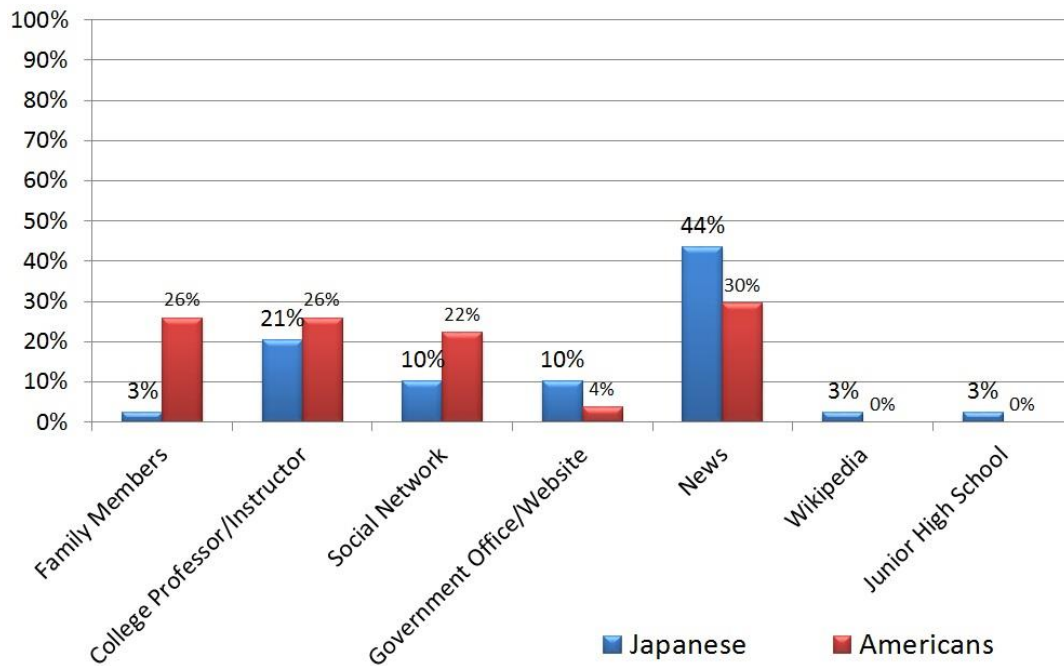
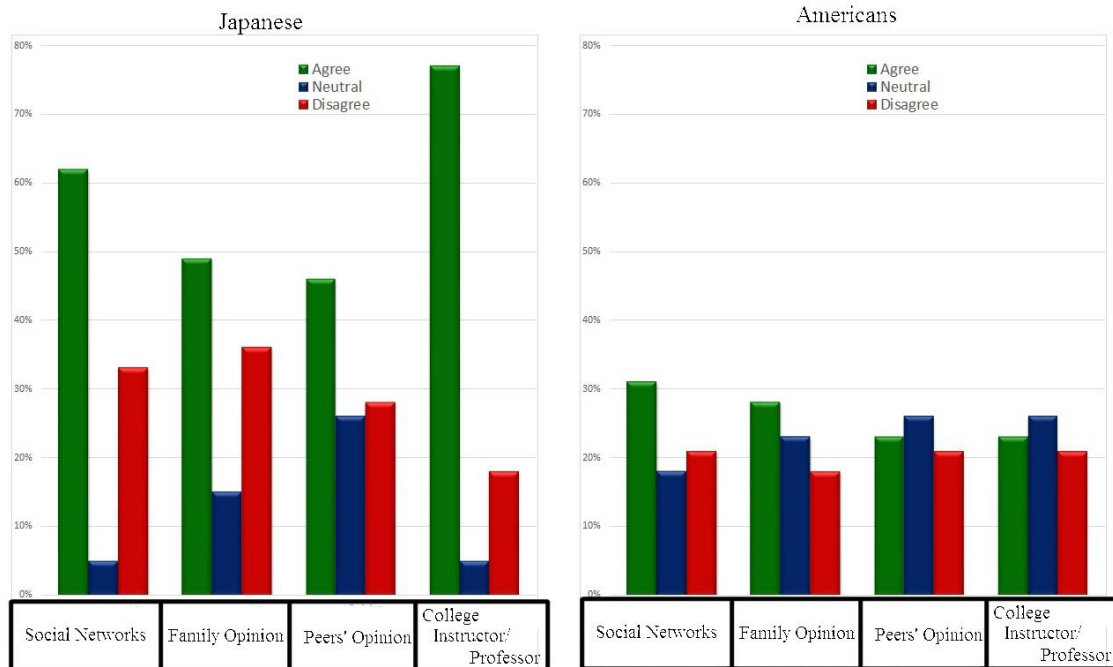


Figure 11 : The largest influence on my opinion of immigration policy



When participants were asked about what their “opinion of immigration policy is most

influenced by” the results were interesting. Japanese participants primary influence is college instructors or professors, with many also listing social networks as an influence. On the other hand, American participants’ results were spread fairly evenly across the options, with the top choice being social networks (See Figure 11).

#### 5.6 Findings Summary for Research Question 2

Some interesting results came from asking about what participants’ opinion of immigration policy was most influenced by. Japanese participants learn most from news with the second being college instructors or professors. Americans learn most from news, with the secondary choices being family and college instructors or professors. Furthermore, Japanese participants’ first choice in what influences them is college instructors or professors, while American participants’ do not have a particular top choice in regards to what influences them, leaving their opinions to be influenced by each source across the board. Though, the results do show that social networks influence them more, by a small margin.

### **6. Conclusion**

Both groups did not know about Immigration Policy or Visa Program, more educational background on immigration policy and related materials is needed from Middle School and High School level. Japanese students’ opinions of immigration policy are influenced by college instructors or professors, while Americans are influenced by social networks, so they need an education on how to decide on and obtain reliable information about immigration policies. American students have a strong opinion about policies regarding religion; the higher population of immigrants in America has an influence on the sources that American Students learn from and are affected by. Japanese students’ opinions of this are weaker; this is likely due to the fact that Japan is a homogenous country with few immigrants.

## 7. Limitations of the Study and Future Study

First there are the Geographical limitations of the study, wherein the majority of American respondents involved were from California universities, whereas the data may be different if universities from other states were included. Also, having such a small number of participants makes the results difficult to generalize across the chosen demographic. Then there is the sensitivity of the topic, because immigration and immigration policies are a sensitive topic for both groups, so students may have felt uncomfortable expressing their true feelings. In the future, I would like to explore this issue on a grander scale, by stretching the reach of the survey to college campuses across the United States and Japan, comparing a wider population. I also want to survey and compare opinions of various groups of people across gender, race, religion, etc.

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