

**“Just Say No”:**

**A comparative analysis of the perspectives of marijuana users in Japan and  
America**

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**Abstract**

With the adoption of new drug policies around the world from countries like the United States of America, Canada, Brazil, and the Netherlands, the mindset towards drug usage has slowly become more relaxed. However, in Japan drug enforcement laws towards cannabis and other substances has been becoming stricter since the end of World War II. For example, in 2017 marijuana related arrests were at an all time high. In this study we will examine the evolution of contemporary perspectives in both Japan and America towards marijuana while focusing on the modern comparison of the perceptions of marijuana users and non-users. The purpose of this study is to analyze how majority perspectives towards marijuana are shaped by modern culture and society. For this study we conducted an online survey of 60 Japanese citizens and 60 Americans. In this study we found that Japanese non-users had significantly more negative opinions on marijuana compared to American non-users. American users and non-users didn't show a significant difference of perception compared to the large gap between Japanese users and non-users. From our results it is apparent both users and non-users in America and Japan are susceptible to the opinions of society and their immediate surroundings. Additionally, we learned that even formal forms of education are still failing to provide useful and accurate information.

## **1. Introduction**

As more research is done about marijuana, information about its medical benefits and dangers are coming to light. Yet there is still a conflict between what can be understood through research, modern perceptions, and legislation. Marijuana use can result in ruined reputation, being fired or even incarceration. By conducting a study to understand the perceptions of Japanese and American people towards marijuana, the reasons behind these perceptions can be better understood as well as their effects. Our hypothesis was that marijuana would be attached to a much higher stigma in Japan than in America and that each country's perception is strongly tied to its drug education, and to the information readily available to its citizens.

## **2. Research Questions**

1. What are the general perceptions of marijuana use in Japan and America?
2. How does 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?

## **3. Significance of 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. Being in California, where even before legalization in 2016

attitudes towards marijuana were much more relaxed (even though it is currently federally illegal) we were surprised at how deep and strong anti-marijuana attitudes were in Japan. We wanted to research how and why these perceptions came to be, and what impact they have on society now in Japan and America.

#### **4. Literature Review**

The following research is on the history cannabis in Japan and the United States, as well as education provided about marijuana and other substances on a public level. History concerning cannabis has set the stage for its current status as a serious narcotic at the federal level in both the U.S and in Japan. By studying the history of cannabis, insight can be gained as to why strict punishments for possession of marijuana came about in both countries. In addition, Japan and the US have used drug education programs to inform the public about the health effects and risks of using marijuana. By analyzing each countries' comprehensive education regarding marijuana, we can better understand the modern perceptions towards marijuana in both countries.

##### **4.1 US History: Pre-War on Drugs**

The use of cannabis has always been prominent in American history, even before its use as a drug. Cannabis can be a useful crop for the production of cannabis fibre, also known as hemp, which has been used in various textiles throughout the world. Hemp cultivation has been present in the U.S since the Jamestown settlement in 1611 (Grinspoon and Bakalar, 1997; Mikuriya, 1969). The laws enacted from the first

legislative assemblies in Jamestown, based on administration from England, even 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). Later in US history, the image of cannabis shifted from hemp and became more associated with marijuana and other cannabinoids under a negative light, which would lead to the decreased demand of hemp in the United States.

Marijuana itself was legal to plant and sell up until the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 (Morgan and Zimmer, 1995). The law did not outright ban marijuana and hemp but enacted strict restrictions upon its cultivation for the purposes of taxation. The creation of this Tax Act can in part be attributed to the U.S government releasing dramatic productions and publications exaggerating the dangers of marijuana. Productions such as *Reefer Madness* (1936) which led to public panic and a demand for congress to create more regulations for this perceived dangerous vice. However, according to David Musto, "Exaggeration fell in the face of the realities of drug use and led to a loss of credibility regarding any government Pronouncement on drugs" (Musto, 1991). The exaggerations that led to this gradual distrust in drug related information provided by the government helped set the stage for the comprehensive shift in attitude towards certain substances in the U.S, including marijuana.

Public opinion about marijuana has historically been closely tied to the minority groups that used it. In the early 1900s when marijuana use was much less prevalent, it was heavily associated with Mexican migrants. From migrant working groups, it traveled

and was popularized within jazz communities which were predominantly black (Musto, 1991). Powerful figures such as Randolph Hearst used white American prejudices against these racial groups to help influence public opinion of the drug. In a 1916 campaign against both marijuana and hemp, Hearst used the spread of racist propaganda such as stories “about marijuana smoking Mexicans and African-Americans who would rape and disrespect whites,” and claimed that “marijuana was the force behind the "voodoo-satanic" music called jazz” (Herer, 1993; Luginbuhl, 2001). The correlation between the race problems in America and the criminalization of marijuana can still be seen today. According to the ACLU, black Americans are at least 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white Americans. 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.

In the 1960s to the early 1970s however, the public faced a temporary perception shift as the new face of marijuana users became closely tied with counter culture of that era (Musto, 1991). In the 1960s, there was arise in popularity of recreational marijuana, led to a backlash in the form of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Act in 1970, making marijuana and other cannabinoids completely illegal (Musto, 1991). Despite many drugs becoming illegal, the public opinion shifted to become even more supportive of recreational drug use. Attitudes towards marijuana were becoming increasingly positive, and even the Presidential Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse proposed "decriminalization" of marijuana, in small amounts for personal use (Musto, 1991). This lead up to the Carter administration formally advocating the legalization of marijuana in

amounts up to an ounce in 1977 (Musto, 1991). This was in stark contrast to the foundations set by the previous Nixon administration, who first coined the term “War on Drugs” in 1971. However, it wasn’t until after the end of the Carter Administration, under President Reagan, that the War on Drugs really took flight.

#### **4.2 US History: Post-War on Drugs**

President Ronald Reagan was inaugurated in 1981, and early in his presidency he was sure to make a distinction between the previous administration's stance on drugs and his own. His public addresses were continuously marked by strongly worded war rhetoric such as, “We are making no excuses for drugs: hard, soft or otherwise” and “we’ve taken down the surrender flag and run up the battle flag,” which decisively set the tone of the government’s drug related rhetoric for decades to come. While the President operated the government in order to combat drugs, the First Lady Nancy Reagan as well played a large role by engaging the public. In 1984 alone, she was responsible for 110 drug-policy related events (Hudak, 2016). First Lady Nancy Reagan personally spearheaded an increased, concerted effort towards anti-drug education, particularly towards young teens and children. In 1984 as well she coined the famous phrase “just say no” in an anti drug message campaign aimed at kids and teens (Hudak, 2016). From the beginning of 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). Additionally, those in favor of penalties for using marijuana rose from 43 percent to 67 percent and this change in attitude strongly correlated with the

shift in attitude among high school students (Musto, 1991). First Lady Reagan's strategic targeting of young Americans was an extremely vital element in the U.S.'s war against drugs.

There were three main pieces of legislation which shaped the governmental restructure that occurred: the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, and the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (Hudak, 2016). These acts increased penalties against drug offenders, but one of the most significant effects of these acts was the introduction of mandatory minimum jail sentences heavily targeting drug offenses in 1986, and harsher sentencing introduced in 1988. From these policy changes, "incarcerations of non violent drug charges increased from 50,000 in 1980 to over 400,000 by 1997 (and as of 2017 1,394,514)" (Hudak, 2016). The new allowances given to the president under the same statutes aided in the seemingly perpetual growth of the War on Drugs.

Following Reagan, President George W. Bush expanded on the War on Drugs effort and replaced Reagan's Drug Abuse Policy Office with the Office of National Drug Abuse Policy (ONDCP), appointing a new director who would from then on be referred to as the drug czar and be a central figure in U.S drug policy execution. 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.(Hudak, 2016). This took the War on Drugs well beyond U.S borders. U.S anti-drug operations have spread into Colombia, Mexico, Honduras, Panama, and many other Latin American countries, extending so far

as to be much like any other typical war against a foreign country (Hudak, 2016). 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.

Currently, U.S drug laws have two different classifications for drug charges, possession or manufacturing, distribution and dispersion. Legality differs depending on local state laws, but where it is banned, penalties for possession are less than those for distribution. Nationally, 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 admitted trying 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 offenses (Drug Policy Alliance, 2019). Even with the progression of drug legislation at a state level, federally the U.S lags behind and the effects of the War on Drugs are not so quick to be left behind.

### **4.3 Japan History: Pre-Reconstruction**

Cannabis hemp has been intertwined with Japanese culture and society, even before the formations of modern Japan. The cannabis plant spread from the Middle East to East Asia and arrived in China by 4000 BCE (Duvall, 2014), and arrived on the Japanese Archipelago by 1000 BCE (Yamamoto, 1992; Crawford 2011). Even the Japanese word, taima, comes from the Chinese use of ta má (Duvall, 2014), and the



word used for hemp as a fibre in Japan is *asa* (Yamamoto, 1990). During the Jomon period, the use of cannabis in Japan was focused on fibre production, using the stalk of the cannabis plant to make fibre. The fibre would then be used to produce everyday clothing, shoes, religious garments, religious paraphernalia, tools, and equipments (Shinozaki, 2014). Even the word used to signify early Japanese civilization, Jomon, translates to 'straw rope pattern', shows an important relation to the use of hemp. The rope and cordage used for the designs on pottery from the Jomon period was made using hemp fibres (Duvall, 2014). Hemp would continue to be used and found in early archeological sites during the Yayoi period, mentioned from Chinese history records from 200 CE like the *gishi wajin den* '魏志倭人伝' and the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* '三国志', as well as being mentioned in the *Manyoshu* during the Nara period (Yamamoto, 1990). The 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.

From the opening to international trade with Europe in the 1850's and commerce during the 1880's, Indian Cannabis, or *Cannabis Indica*, entered Japanese pharmaceutical influence and research. As early as 1895, advertisements claiming [cannabis cigarettes] could cure and alleviate a myriad of medical conditions including asthma began to surface along with products that used hemp seed oil that could be applied to the skin (*Mainichi Shimbun*, 1895). Additionally, the *Japanese Pharmacopoeia*, a scholarly publication which discussed medical compounds and their effects, covered the benefits from using cannabis in pharmaceuticals such as tinctures

and extracts as cannabis was legal for scientific research and was approved for trade. The legality of cannabis in pharmaceuticals would not be revoked from the *Japanese Pharmacopoeia* until 1954, due to the Cannabis Control Act of 1948 (Yamamoto, 1992). With the influx of Indian Cannabis in Japan, there has been speculation of some cases of use of imported pipes for the purpose of smoking cannabis during the late 18th century. However, there has yet to be any concrete evidence in the academic community regarding this claim. Even while the importation of Indian Cannabis was present, it never gained traction in Japan like opium did in America around the same time.

In 1925 at the International Opium Conference, an international drug treaty was signed. The 1925 meeting disallowed the exportation of all forms of cocaine and opium, and disallowed the exportation of parts of cannabis used for drug use, unless given scientific or medical permission. All three drugs would be therein labelled as narcotics (Yamamoto, 1992). While the conference controlled the exportation of these drugs, internal production use and trade were allowed to be managed by each respective nation. Japan would continue to use cannabis to produce fibre and hemp would become a key economic and military asset during the 20th century.

Once Japan's military enacted the National Mobilization Law in 1938 control over the production, distribution, and collection of raw materials and produced goods would be managed through various Japanese Ministries (Pauer, 1991). By the 1940's the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the recently formed government Control Corporation, Tousei Kaisha, worked with the Ministry of Commerce to found a

government operated company known as the Nippon Hara, which soon would consist of various hemp and fibre based companies to increase the production of national fibres for the war effort (*Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, 1940; Pauer, 1991). By 1942, there were 23 different hemp manufacturing and distribution companies within the scope of the Control Corporation (*Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, 1942). The production of cotton, wool, synthetic fibre, and hemp would be increased for the remainder of the war. Museum Curator of the Taima Hakubutsukan and hemp rights activist Junichi Takayasu explains that “During World War II, there was a saying among the military that without cannabis, the war couldn’t be waged” (Mitchell, 2011). This statement can be a key part to explaining the de-hempification of Japan after the American reconstruction period.

#### **4.4 Japan History: Post Reconstruction**

After the end of WWII, Japan’s comprehensive drug control policies experienced a huge shift. The Allied Powers, in particular the United States, influenced Japanese drug policy during Japan’s reconstruction. Starting in 1946 the Ministry of Health and Welfare formed a new division designating narcotics control officers (Nagahama, 1968). This division was separated into three branches throughout the country with eight district sections for the narcotic control officers.

It was closely following this in 1948, that the Cannabis Control Law was first introduced (Nagahama, 1968). These initial laws were targeting the hemp industry, particularly its import, export and sale, as Japan’s new occupier the United States was aiming control the Japanese economy to the U.S.’s benefit. This in part meant cutting

down the Japanese hemp industry in hopes to push materials like polyester and nylon, which were cheaper to produce. Coincidentally, the U.S had powerful and wealthy lobbyists who started the growth of the synthetic textile industry from then til now (Luginbuhl, 2001). This extended beyond the hemp industry as well and included personal possession of cannabis under its new restrictions. However as hemp had been considered as a war material throughout the Second World War for its use as rope, parachute cords, and other materials, this can be seen as another facet of the U.S limiting the Japanese militaristic force as much as possible.

These regulations were further built upon with amendments to the Cannabis Control Law prohibiting its cultivation entirely. This of course caused a major upset among Japan's hemp growers and "Emperor Hirohito visited Tochigi Prefecture in the months prior to the ban to reassure farmers they would be able to continue to grow in defiance of the new law," (Mitchell, 2014) and hemp cultivation continued mostly unhindered for decades after. As late as 1950 there were as many as 25,000 cannabis farms within the nation however in the following decades this number faced a steep decline. This was in part due to the added expense of the licenses that were required for cannabis farmers under the Cannabis Control Act of 1948 and in part due to the rise in popularity of alternative artificial fabrics such as nylon and polyester.

Through the late 1960s, reported incidents of marijuana crime in Japan began to increase. Marijuana offences that correlated with a number of arrests of foreign sailors and soldiers on leave from the Vietnamese war fronts who were importing marijuana into Japan in small portions (Nagahama, 1968). By 1969, Japanese gangs and

Japanese citizens began having disposable income to purchase such substances, as well as many citizens traveling internationally which led to increased cannabis product purchases and subsequent importation on return to Japan (Vaughn, 1995).

In 1963 drug control in Japan experienced another spike and “the number of narcotics control officers and the budget for narcotics control investigation were greatly increased,” and following this expansion the number of drug arrests were the highest on record (Nagahama, 1968). Along with increased funding were increased penalties and the introduction of involuntary hospitalization for cases of narcotic addictions. Following 1963 drug arrests for marijuana continued to increase, but even so Japanese drug enforcement still consistently held a higher focus on methamphetamines and solvent abuse.

However, arrests for solvent abuse, which had always been higher than those for marijuana, peaked in the 1980s and steadily declined until eventually in 2006 arrests for marijuana rose above those for solvent abuse (Wada, 2011). With solvent abuse decreasing, and marijuana use becoming a larger focus from the Japanese police force, many new trafficking methods for marijuana and other drugs began emerging. Newer and easier accessible technology aided in the dispersion of harmful substances, the use of phones and internet communications allowed many drug traffickers to deliver their products easier and more discreetly (Uruyama, 2008). In 2000, reports of marijuana arrests were recorded at 2,312, peaked at 2,867 in 2004, and subsided to 1,616 in 2013 (Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference 2014). This increase in arrests was specifically in concern over the growing number of cannabis use becoming

prevalent in adolescence. In 2014 the Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference was held to discuss what measures would be taken against all types of narcotics (Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference 2014). Few studies have been conducted on the percentage of people in Japan who have used marijuana, but the World Health Organisation places that number at 1.5%.

With marijuana use still growing but policies against marijuana being so harsh, many drug distributors and users began seeking marijuana alternatives. One alternative in Japan is called legal herbs, also known as “spice,” which is a synthetic cannabinoid that contains chemicals different from THC but activate the same receptors. Legal herbs have gotten media attention in Japan due to an increased number car accidents from drivers using legal herbs (J-Cast News 2014; Asahi Shimbun 2014). One of the main reasons for legal herbs is so dangerous is that many marijuana users consider it similar to marijuana and can end up using too much which can cause adverse health effects not present or obtainable through traditional marijuana. The Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference addressed these issues by calling for an increased movement to spread awareness about legal herbs, and dissuade its use.

Currently marijuana is illegal in all forms in Japan, with no distinction between medicinal or recreational use, this includes conducting research regarding medical marijuana with clinical studies being strictly prohibited (Miyaji et al., 2016). In Japan, possession is considered a more serious crime than in the United States. Penalties are markedly more severe than penalties for a comparable offense in the United States. Penalties for trafficking and importation in Japan are heavy but for the most part show a

greater degree of overlap with penalties for trafficking and importation than in the United States.

#### **4.5 U.S Education**

With the pronouncement of the War on Drugs came the creation of comprehensive drug education in the U.S. In 1983, in response to high youth drug abuse in Los Angeles, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education, D.A.R.E, was established as a joint project between the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Los Angeles Police Department targeting elementary students. This program utilized police officers to present information as a tactic to humanize the drug prevention lectures. 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” (D.A.R.E, 2019). In 1984, D.A.R.E. expanded its curriculum to middle-school and a high school curriculum was also officially introduced in 1989.

Following the founding of D.A.R.E, First Lady Nancy Reagan’s incidental statement of “just say no” in 1984 sparked a national movement connecting both parent and student organizations for America’s campaign for comprehensive drug education. Part of this was an anti-drug campaign targeting teens called the Partnership for Drug Free America (now the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids) which was established in 1986 (Hudak, 2016). The following year this partnership created one of the most famous U.S anti-drug advertisements in the form of a video that used a cracked egg in a frying pan

to symbolize a brain under the influence of drugs. All of these campaigns were threaded with misinformation about marijuana being highly addictive and its role as a “gateway drug” leading to the use of harder more dangerous substances. Information 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).

In 1988 the Anti-Drug Abuse Act was enacted and drug education funding experienced a substantial increase. By then D.A.R.E, the Partnership for Drug-Free America and the “Just Say No” campaign had all partnered together and from this Act now received federal funding. Additionally, it amended previously existing federal programs and repurposed them for drug policy. With additional funding, the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 began to support drug education alongside its already provided nutritional education (Hudak, 2016).

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). They perhaps even had opposite effect in exposing them to drugs, increasing their curiosity, as theorized as a possibility by President Eisenhower as far back as 1956. The cost to fund D.A.R.E is tremendously expensive, so this lack of results has brought to question whether the program is really worth continuing (Hudak, 2016). The comprehensive failure of U.S drug education is just indicative of the U.S War on Drugs as a whole, which has squandered billions while proving be wholly ineffective.



#### 4.6 Japan 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). While education before the reconstruction period scarcely discussed the medicinal or recreational use of cannabis, there was a period of medical discussion of cannabis and cannabis based products. For a short period in the 1890s when Indian Cannabis was being imported into Japan and the Japanese Pharmacopoeia, along with local newspapers discussing its various uses to ease symptoms of various ailments (Yamamoto, 1992, *Mainichi Shimbun*, 1895).

After WWII Japan's drug education was heavily influenced by the United States through the reconstruction, causing anti-drug education to spread and become further normalized. As discussed earlier, the Cannabis Control law was started in 1948, however wouldn't be finalized until 1990 (Yamamoto, 1992). In the 1960s drug and marijuana use began to rise, and with few government programs available many community organizations formed to combat drug abuse and addiction, with fairly successful results. In the 1970s organizations like the *Counsellors for Narcotic Addicts* and *Volunteers for the Prevention of Stimulant Abuse* would work with local communities and municipal offices to better rehabilitate drug users by providing information on health centers, employment opportunities, educational enrollment centers, and discuss how users could be better accepted in a government program called "Daily Life Security", which provided stipends for living expenses (Vaughn, 1995).

Community Organizations would be the start of informal education in the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1988 their groundwork would be adopted by government organizations.

In 1987, police worked with the National United Crime Preventive Association and the Stimulant Drug Prevention Center to produce anti-drug posters, movies, and videotapes (*Keisatsu Hakusho*; 1987, Vaughn, 1995). These posters, movies, and videotapes differed from prior community education, by only focusing on the dangers of drugs, but failed to provide information on support programs to help offenders. In 1988, the amount of anti-drug video tapes produced increased to 600 (*Keisatsu Hakusho*, 1989; Vaughn, 1995). From these laws and anti-drug paraphernalia, drug education soon grew on a national scale, and would formulate the Japanese War on Drugs, through the slogan of *Dame Zettai*, which means “No, Absolutely No”.

The Japanese equivalent of America’s “Just say no” movement formally began in 1988. The Japanese slogan “*Dame Zetta*” started shortly after the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances as a supplementary program (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, 2008). As a result, policies on drug users became much harsher within the following years. The first reason for this was the large educational *Dame Zettai* campaign that vilified drug users, and the second reason is the heavy influence from the United States’ “War on Drugs” which aided in the formation of Japan’s drug policy. The United States heavily urged Japan drug policies become more strict in order to combat international drug trafficking into the US and other nations as much as possible (Vaughn, 1995). With the Drug and Stimulant Abuse Prevention Center, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare would go to

schools and community events to distribute anti-drug information over the next 30 years, in hopes of preventing adolescent substance abuse. Posters featuring famous celebrities and athletes, a *dame zettai* mascot, numerous illustrative pamphlets, education in school books, and even a manga series would be created to help educate many in Japan (Drug and Stimulant Abuse Prevention Center, 2009; Nihon Gakkō Hokenkai 2012; Ministry of Health, Labour, Welfare, 2008 & 2019). The program would be modified over the years and be thought of by policy makers to tackle topics like; enhancement of drug abuse prevention education in schools, thorough prevention of relapse by strengthening support drug abusers and their families, and the destruction of drug trafficking organizations (Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference, 2014).

#### **4.7 Current Risks**

As discussed in previous sections many aspects of current policy on all substances can be improved to better help the needs of substance users. Current policies can push substances out of government control and result in increased black markets, unidentifiable substances entering the market, substances becoming more potent to accommodate easier trafficking, and increase in discrete trafficking methods (Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference, 2014). Current educational systems heavily demonize the use of drugs as well as those who use them. The danger of this vilification can further isolate drug users, damage educational credibility, increase the demand for alternative unregulated news sources, and risk spreading misinformation that can negatively affect users and non users.

Currently the *Dame Zettai* movement has been criticized for similar reasons as the American D.A.R.E Program. One major reason is the *Dame Zettai* message is very harsh on current drug users and risks pushing users away from society further, which has been shown to result in an increased suicide rate (Newcomb & Bentley, 1989; Matsumoto, 2019). Not only can this form of education cause societal risks, it also risks damaging the government and schooling systems' image. By only discussing the negatives, and presenting biased information, many drug users no longer look towards these sources of information as reliable (Matsumoto, 2019). In many of the educational pamphlets and illustrations drug users are portrayed very negatively with the pamphlets often making scary conclusion regarding the dangers of using drugs even once such as, you can become addicted for life, have seizures, die, and that you will commit crime and even murder because of drugs (Ministry of Health, Labour, Welfare, 2019). While the first two focus on health dangers, the last one creates a very negative image for users and can result minorities to facing more prejudice instead of working together.

#### **4.8 Literature Review Conclusion**

The War on Drugs as a movement started in the United States and spread to Japan. In both countries, marijuana was heavily demonized as capable of a wide range of negative health effects through propaganda in ways that were harmful for the reader. Laws regarding marijuana in the United States are now changing to be friendlier at the state level, and attitudes among Americans are also starting to follow suit. Meanwhile, in Japan, laws regarding marijuana have not become more lenient, and research

regarding the effects of marijuana are scarce. In both countries drug policies have changed to reflect public perceptions and in Japan substance use has been on the rise, which could result in future changes to current drug policy standards.

## **5. Methodology**

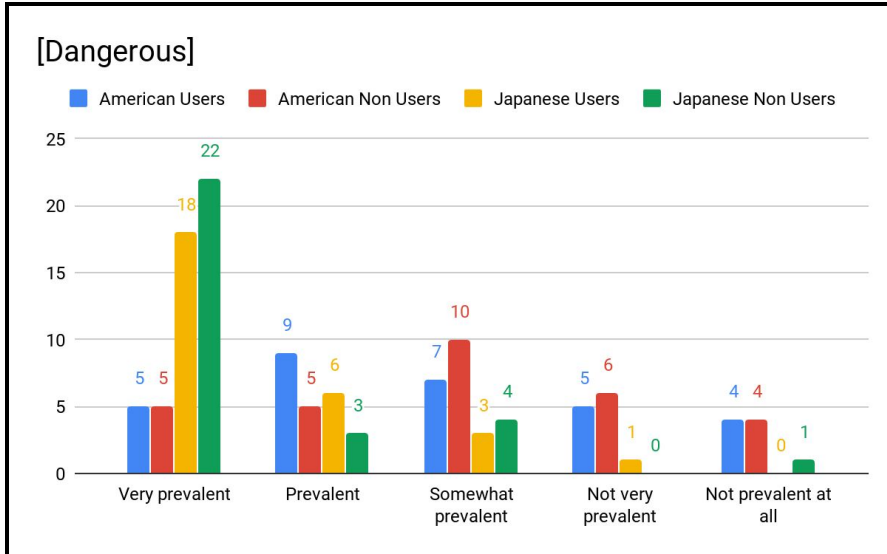
Using Google Forms, we conducted four surveys based on experience using marijuana and national origin. American users and non-users were surveyed in English while Japanese users and non-users were surveyed in Japanese. There were 125 American user responses, 82 American non-user responses, 31 Japanese user responses and 52 non-user responses. However a random sample of 30 were selected from each set of survey responses to compile the data of our findings, as well as to ensure the reliability of comparing and contrasting data.

## **6. Results**

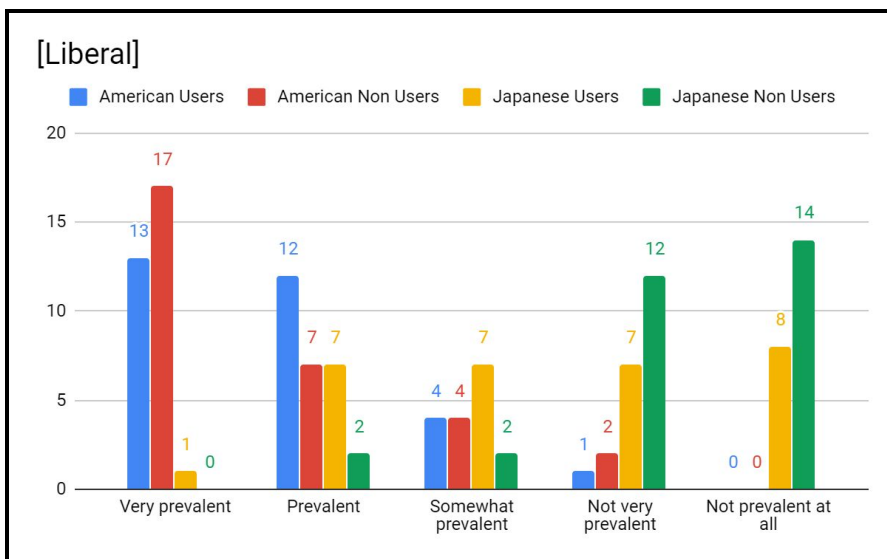
### **6.1 Research Question 1: What are the general perceptions of marijuana use in Japan and America?**

Most Japanese respondents agreed “dangerous” is a prevalent stereotype about marijuana users, while most American respondents agreed “liberal” is a prevalent stereotype about marijuana users (see Figure 1 and 2).

#### **Figure 1: dangerous image**

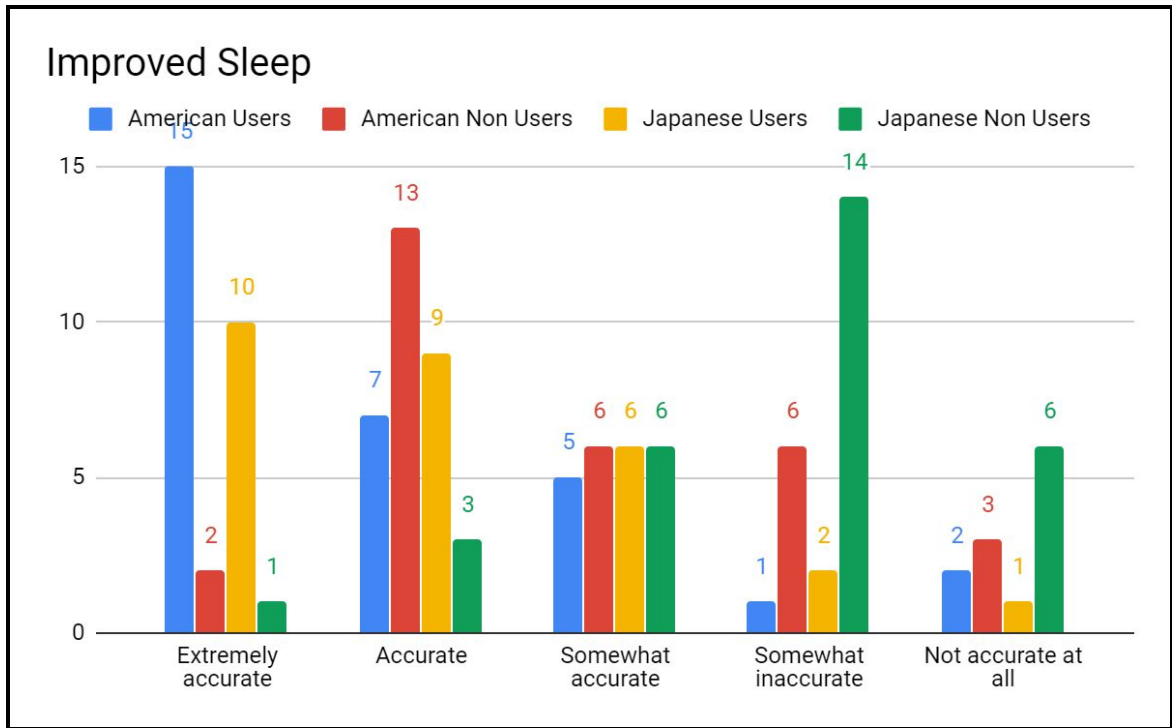


**Figure 2: liberal image**



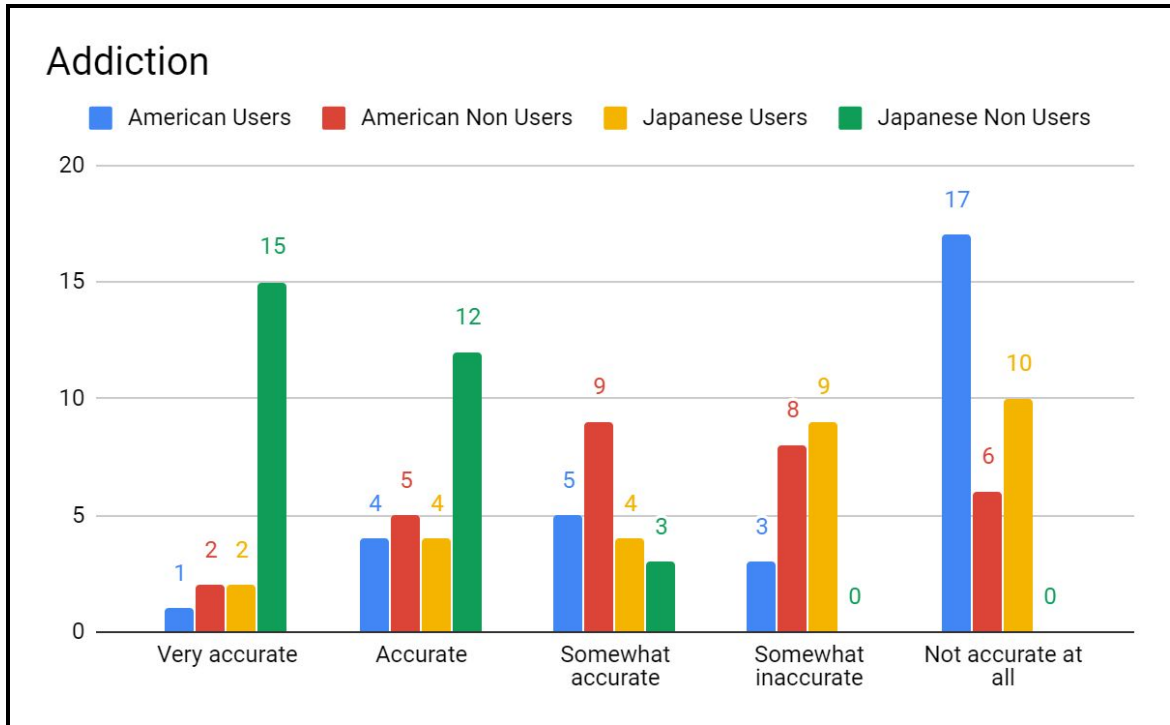
Both American response groups and Japanese user respondents think marijuana can help improve sleep. Japanese non-users do not believe that marijuana can be used to aid sleep (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Marijuana’s Improved Sleep Effectiveness**



Both American response groups and Japanese users do not think that marijuana is addictive. Japanese non-users strongly believe that marijuana is highly addictive (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Perception Towards Marijuana Addictiveness**



## 6.2 Research Question 1 - Summary of Findings

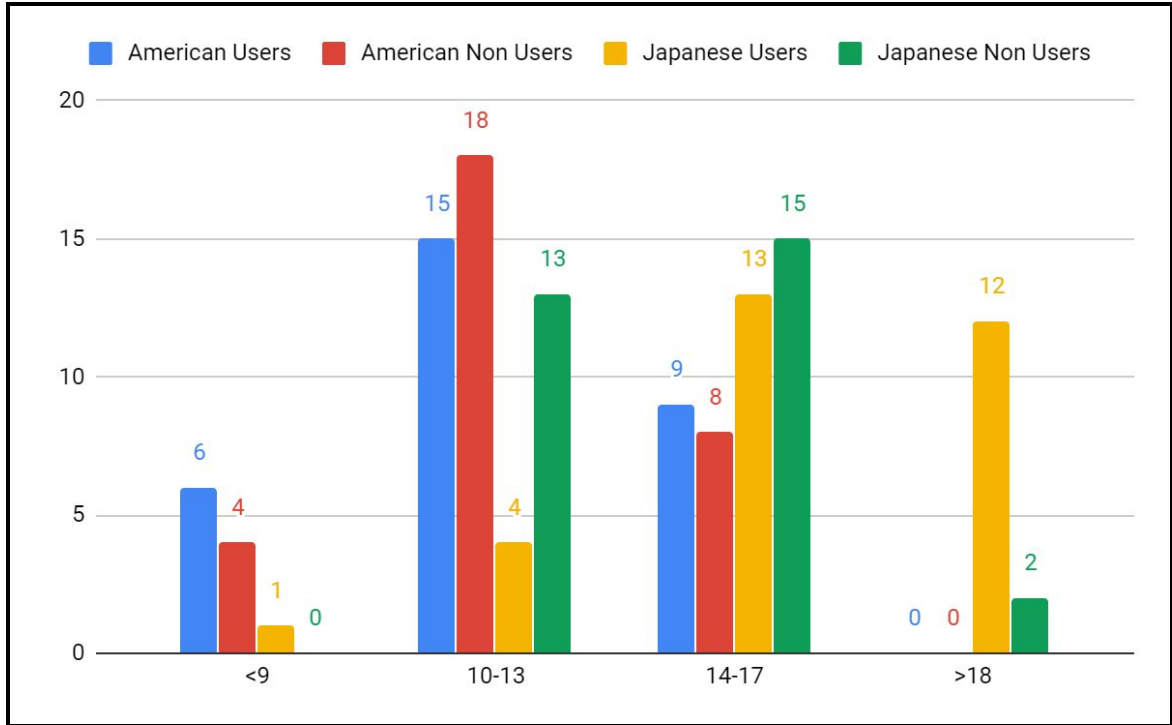
Both Japanese users and non-users agree that “dangerous” is a common stereotype about marijuana users. According to the Drug Abuse Countermeasures Promotion Conference this could be because in Japan marijuana is often correlated to “spice”, the synthetic drug. From the counterculture movement during 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.

## 6.3 Research Question 2: How does formal and informal education of marijuana affect the perceptions of marijuana use made in America and Japan?



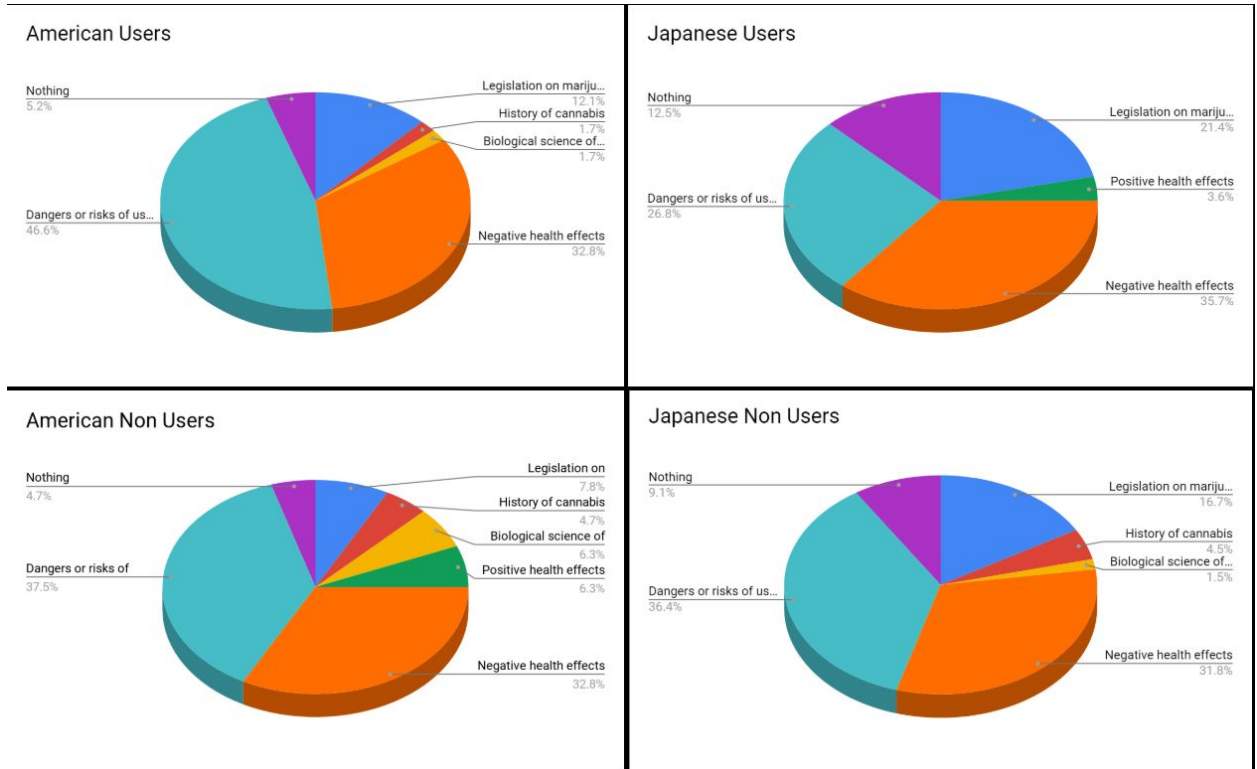
Firstly, 93% of Japanese non-users first learned about marijuana under the age of 18. However, 40% of Japanese users first learned over the age of 18 (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: At what age did you first learn about marijuana?**



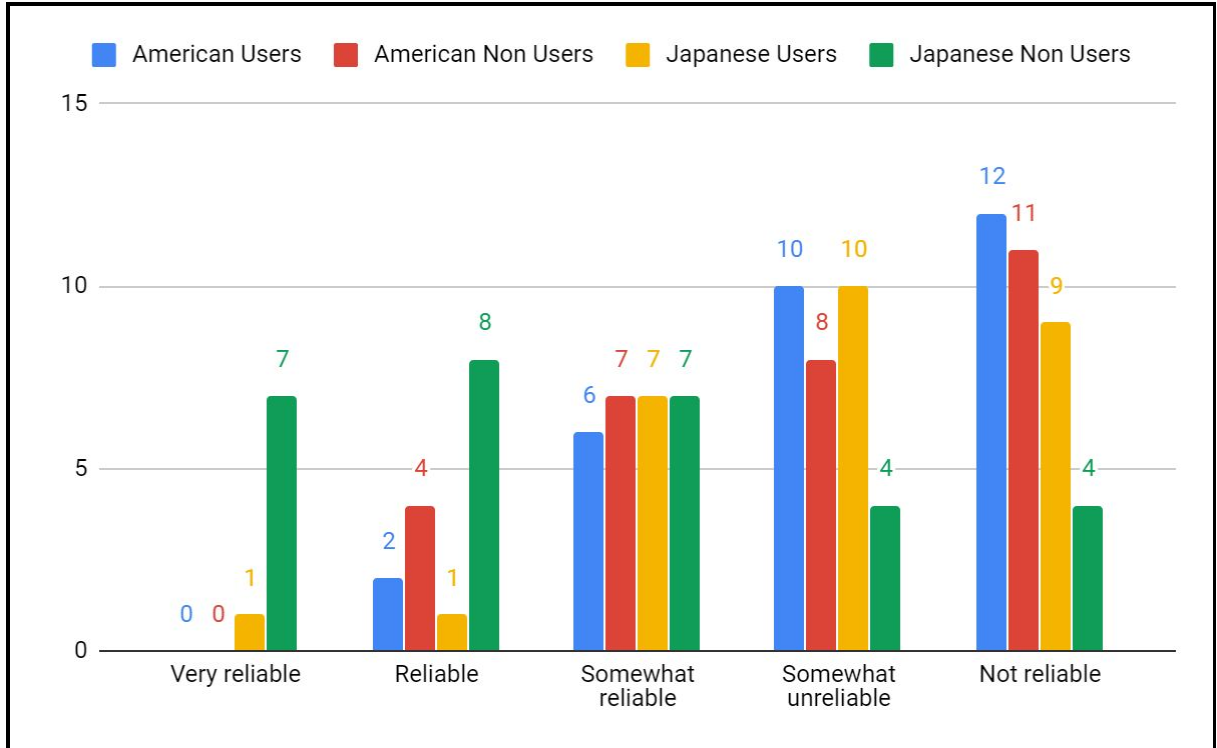
All four groups responded that the dangers and risks of using (light blue), and negative health effects (orange) were the most covered subjects taught in school concerning marijuana (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: What was covered in school education regarding marijuana?**



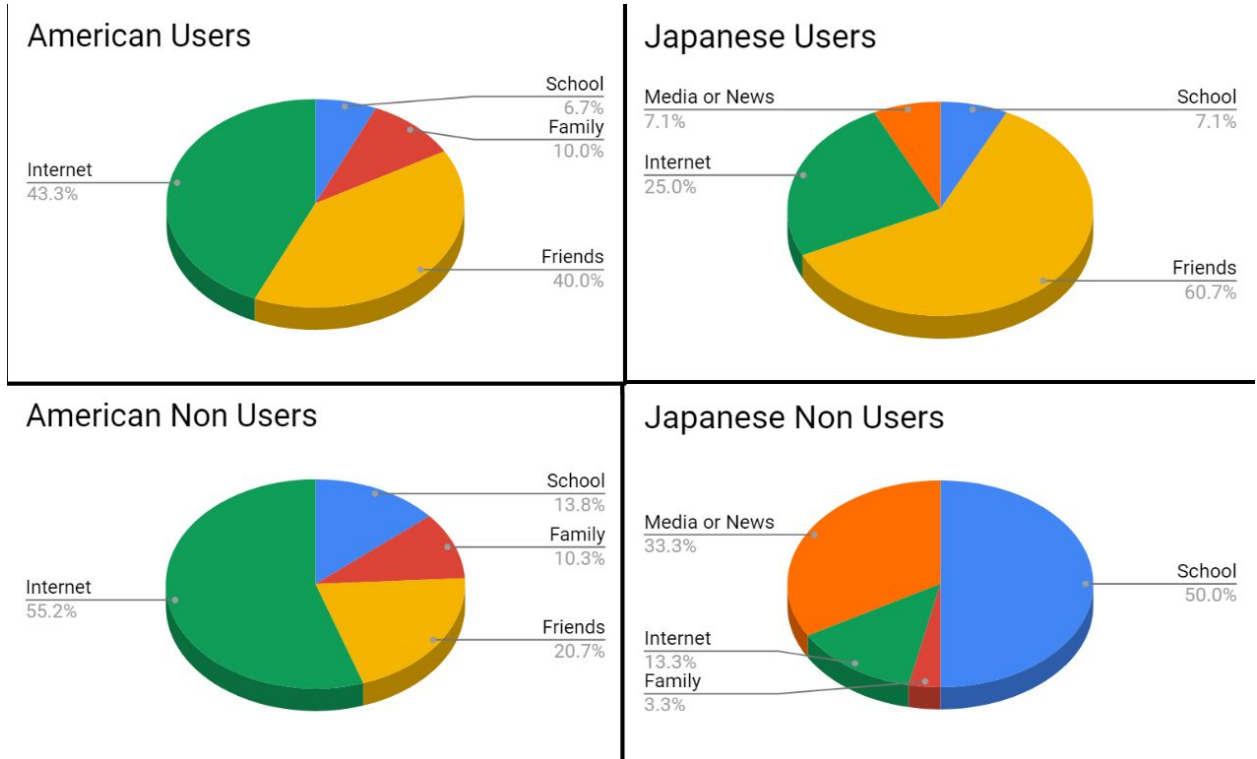
Majority of American respondents and Japanese users don't think that the education they receive concerning marijuana was reliable. Majority of Japanese non-users believe that the drug education they received in school was reliable (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Reliability of school education**



American respondents and Japanese users said they learned the most from either the internet or friends. Japanese non-users said they learned the most from either school or news and media (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Largest source of knowledge concerning marijuana**



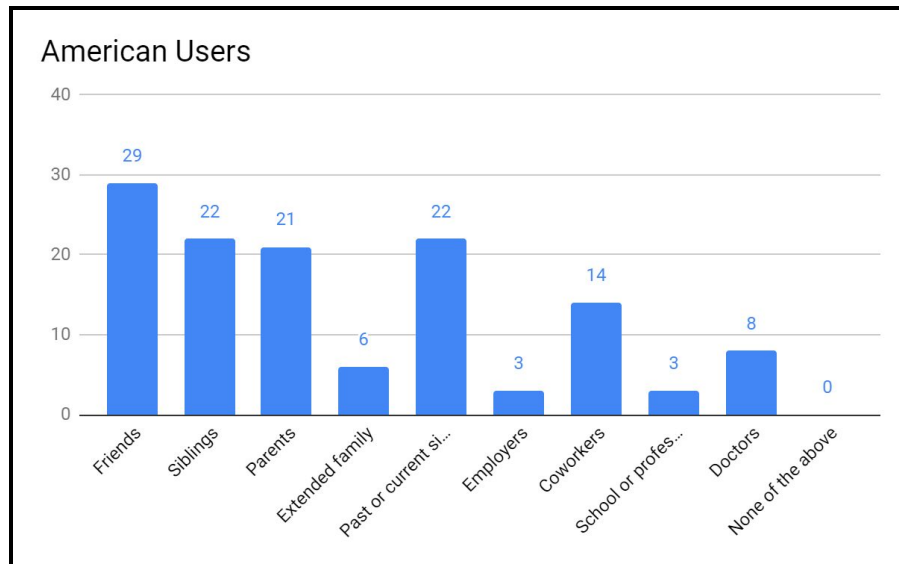
#### 6.4 Research Question 2 - Summary of Findings

Japanese users learned about marijuana at an older age compared to Japanese non-users. This shows a correlation with how education affects youth education, and it can be said that the earlier drug education is introduced, the probability of drug use may go down within youth populations. 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.

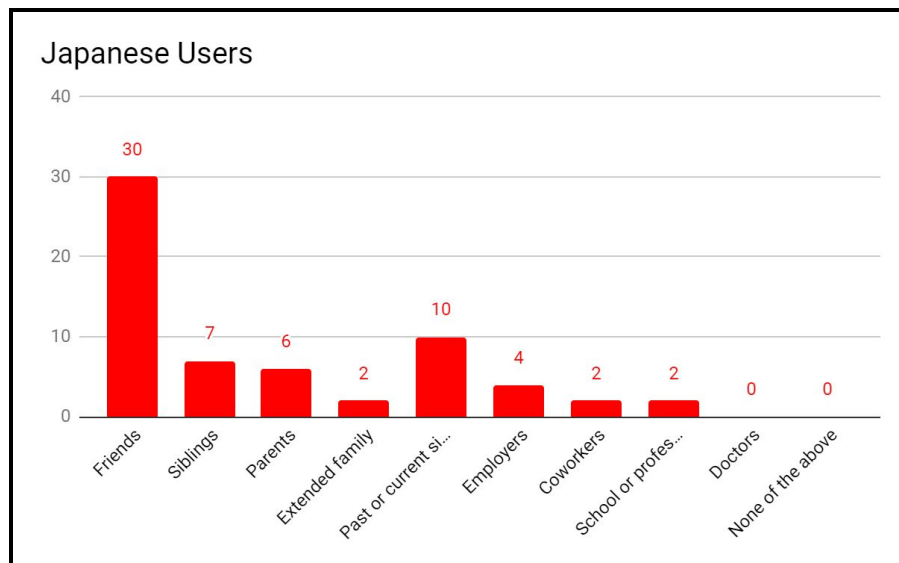
### 6.5 Research Question 3: How do general perceptions of marijuana socially impact marijuana users in Japan and America?

Compared with Japanese users, American users responded that more people around them know about their marijuana use (see Figure 9 and 10).

**Figure 9: Who knows about your marijuana use? (American)**

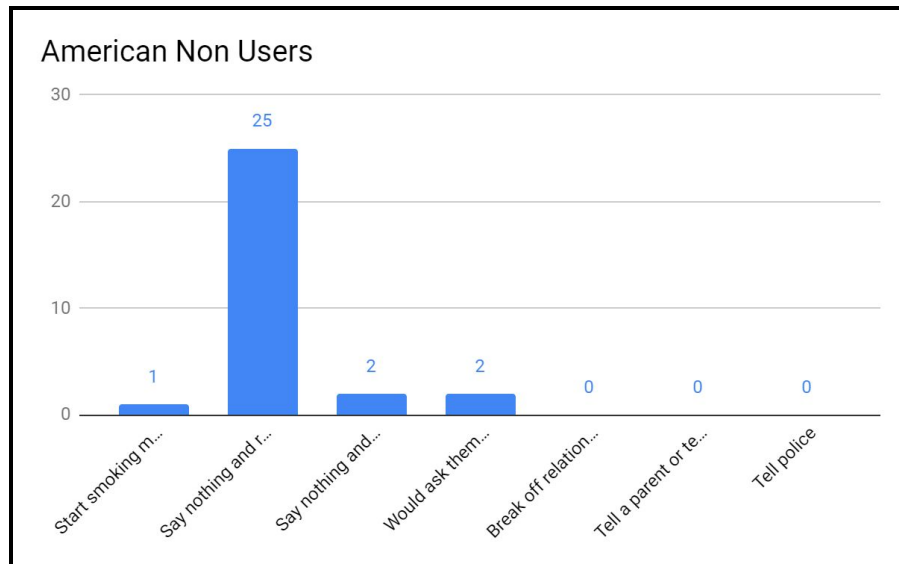


**Figure 10: Who knows about your marijuana use? (Japanese)**



83% of American non-users said that if a friend were to start using marijuana they would “say nothing and remain friends” but 76% of Japanese non-users said they would “Say nothing and slowly create distance with them” or that they “would ask them to stop” (see Figure 11 and 12).

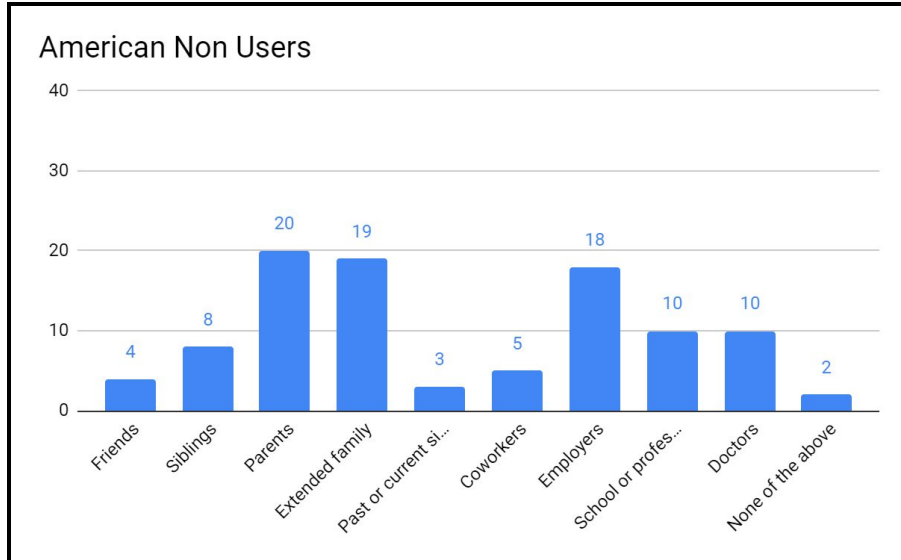
**Figure 11: If a friend started using marijuana (American)**



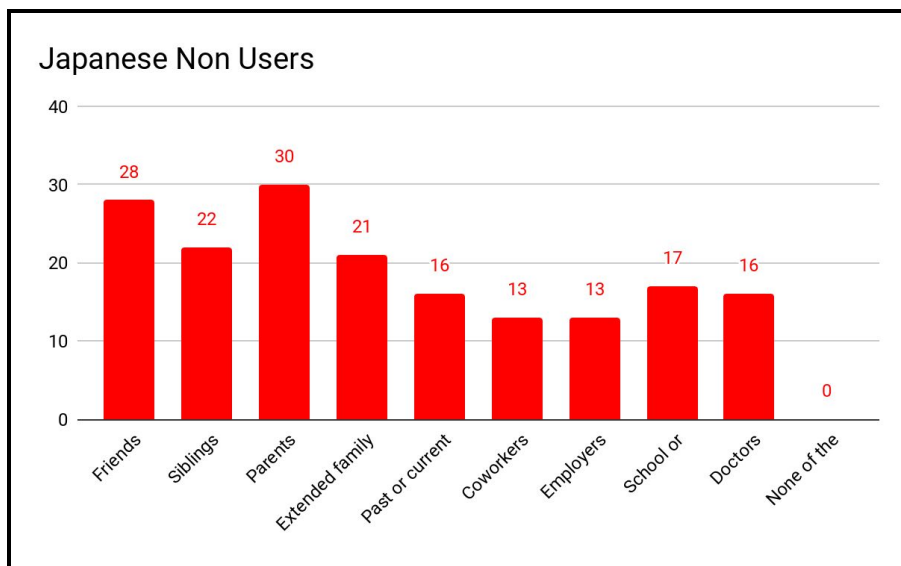
**Figure 12: If a friend started using marijuana (Japanese)**

If non-users were to use marijuana, Japanese respondents believe more people around them would disapprove than America (see Figure 13 and 14).

**Figure 13: If you used marijuana, who would disapprove? (American)**

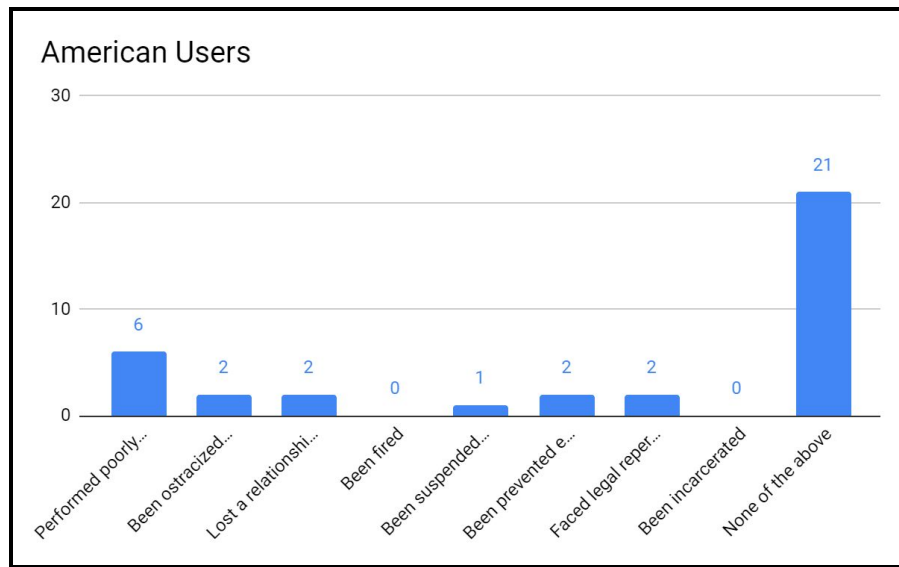


**Figure 14: If you used marijuana, who would disapprove? (Japanese)**

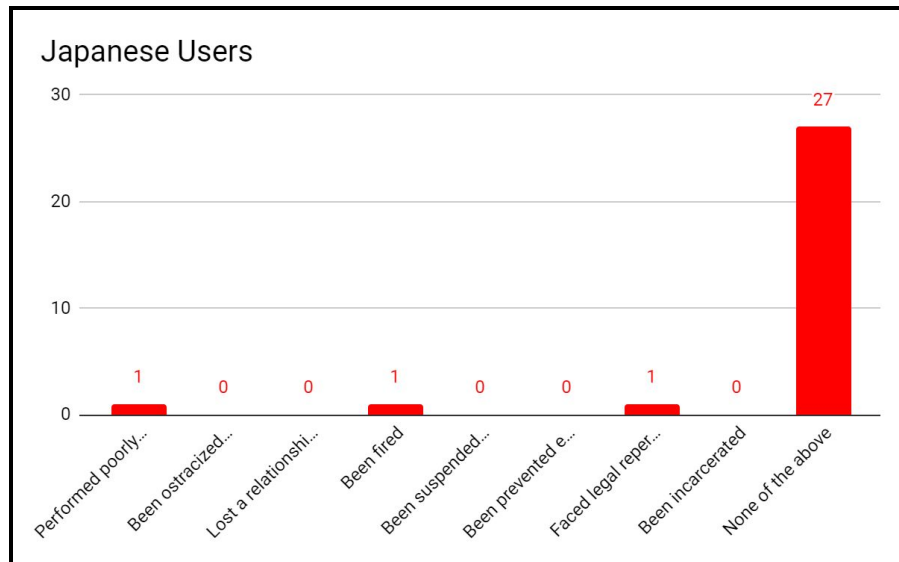


The majority of both Japanese and American users said they have not experienced any negative effects from marijuana use, however a small number of Americans said they had “Performed poorly in school or at work,” “lost a relationship” or “been prevented employment” etc. (see Figure 15 and 16).

**Figure 15: Negative social experiences from using marijuana (American)**



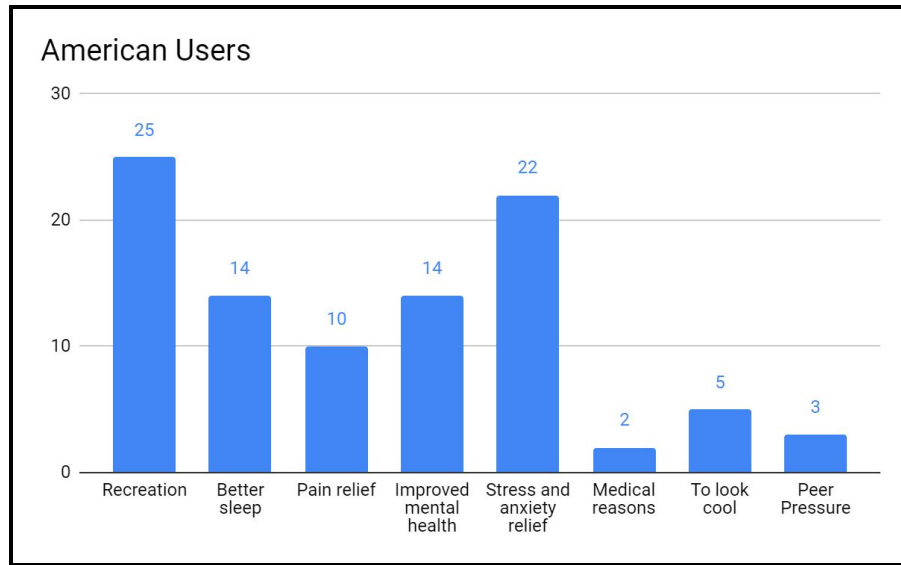
**Figure 16: Negative social experiences from using marijuana (Japanese)**



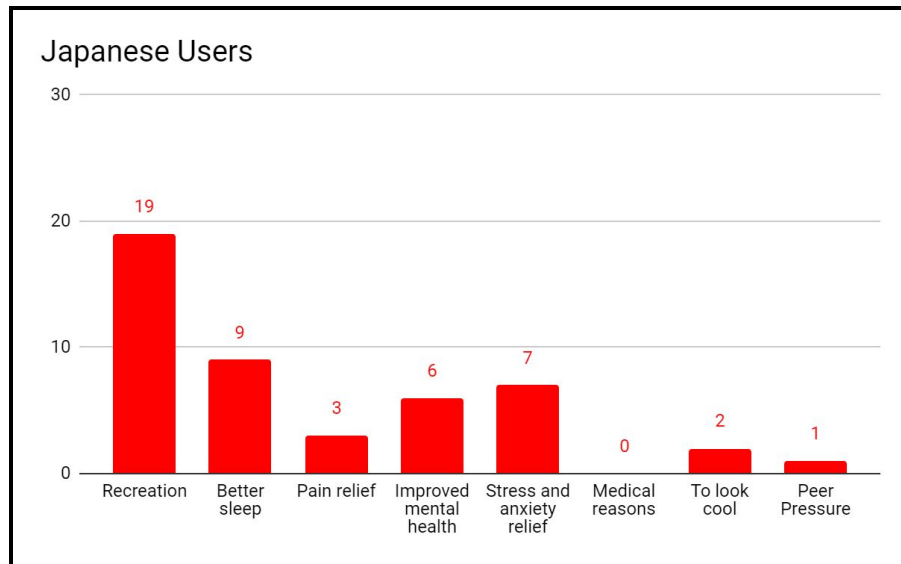
Two largest reasons for using marijuana given from American users was recreation, and stress or anxiety relief. Most common reason from Japanese users was recreation (see Figure 17 and 18).



**Figure 17: Reason for using marijuana (American)**

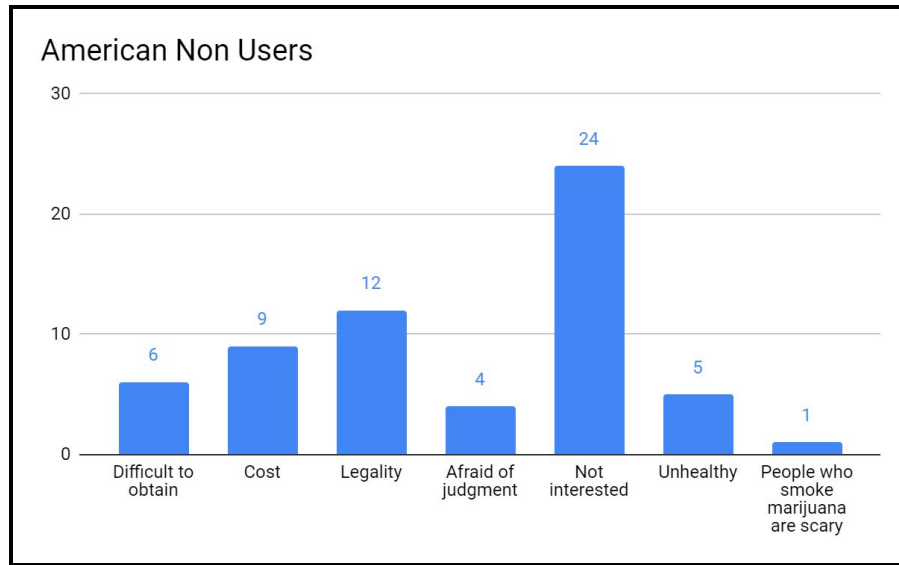


**Figure 18: Reason for using marijuana (Japanese)**

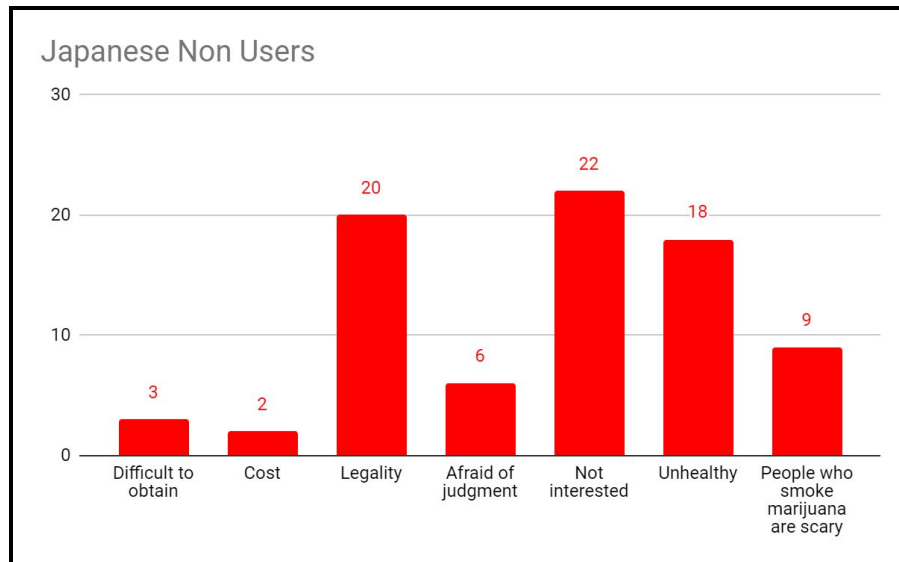


66% of Japanese non-users said their reason for not using marijuana was because of legality, but 60% said because it's unhealthy, while 73% said because they just weren't interested. The majority of American respondents said because they weren't interested (see Figure 19 and 20).

**Figure 19: Reason for not using marijuana (American)**



**Figure 20: Reason for not using marijuana (Japanese)**



### 6.6 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 were not interested. From this it can said that law isn't the only contribution towards

desire to use marijuana, but also perception and knowledge about marijuana. The 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 marijuana users see a higher possibility of social consequence from marijuana use than Americans.

## **7. Conclusion**

In Japan marijuana is generally seen as dangerous and highly addictive. This could be because average Japanese citizens do not know the difference between “spice” and natural marijuana. 40% of American non-users said they did not use marijuana because of legality. A large amount of Japanese non-users also said because of legality, but also because of its negative health effects. 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 one’s immediate surroundings has a large effect on perception. Furthermore, that perception toward marijuana is not shaped just by its legality but also where the information about marijuana is coming from.

## **8. Limitations of the study and future study points**

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, we surmise that Japanese users were 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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