

## **No Music No Life: The Roles of Music for American and Japanese College Students**

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### **Abstract**

Music is a part of our lives and a way to express one's opinions or self-identity. It reflects various cultures, communities, and age groups and is used in a multitude of ways. Over the past 40 years, music has grown to become one of the largest sectors of entertainment. Due to current developments in technology, with the use of streaming services, it is now easier than ever to obtain the music that you like to listen to. Making up the first and second-largest music industries respectively, America and Japan's music markets have many areas of overlap, but also have unique cultural differences that define them individually.

Through an online survey administered to 150 Japanese and American college students, we asked about people's usage of music in their daily lives as well as how they consume music. We found that in America, music is used more as an individual pastime, whereas in Japan it's used as a means to connect with other people. In America, students most often listen to music without directly purchasing it via streaming services. However, Japanese students most often purchase albums and singles digitally. We also discovered that physical music sales among Japanese college students are starting to decline. This may be due to the growing popularity of streaming services and digital music marketplaces. We also found that Japanese students are more willing to spend more money on music as well as merchandise related to the artists that they like. This is presumably due to Japanese students wanting to share the things that they like with people around them and is rooted in a part of Japanese culture that values connections between others. With this research, we were able to more deeply understand the ever-evolving music industry, as well as college students and how they are intertwined with music in their daily lives.

### **Introduction**

No matter what country, Music is used as a fun way to pass time. However, depending on the country and the person, its usage in daily life, how it's obtained, and how it is used can vary greatly. For many years, America's music industry has been the largest in the world. On the other hand, Japan has recently become the 2nd largest. America's CD sales have fallen, but in Japan, CD sales are still high. With music

streaming services gaining popularity in both countries, how people purchase music has started to change. Through the efforts of this research, we will find how people in Japan and America enjoy music.

## **1. Significance of Study**

Bogna:

In high school, I became close with a teacher through Japanese music, and this sparked my decision to major in Japanese. When I studied abroad in Japan, the Japanese music that I listened to was completely different from my Japanese friends; I wanted to know why. Also, understanding the music industry and spending habits of Japan will be helpful in my business double major if I decide to become involved in international business.

Mussell:

I had been interested in music from a young age, with both of my parents being musicians. Currently, I am working as a freelancer in the Japanese music industry. When studying abroad in Tokyo, I worked at a Japanese music company, and from that experience, I realized that I was interested in the music industry. I would like to use the information from this capstone regarding the differences between the music industries in my work, as well as in my future career.

## **2. Research Questions**

- 1.How do American and Japanese college students associate with music in their daily lives and why?
- 2.How do American and Japanese college students consume the music that they listen to?

## **3.Research Background**

### **3.1 Change in technology and Accessibility to Music**

Let's look at the history behind music and its technology. As shown in Figure 1, from 1970 to 2007 how people listen to music has changed. (BBC UK, 2014) In the 1970s the cassette tape took off, and in 1979 the SONY WALKMAN was released. Thanks to this, even if you went outside, as long as you had your cassette tape or SONY WALKMAN you could listen to music anywhere and anytime. After that, in 1982 SONY released the world's first CD Player. The evolution from cassette tape to CD greatly changed the music industry. The next big step following that was in 2001 when Apple released the first iPod to the world. Lighter than a CD player, using iTunes on a computer gave users the ability to easily add a large amount of music that they liked into their device. Following the iPod, in 2007 the iPod Touch was released. The iPod Touch had a variety of features and capabilities and using the iTunes Store app anyone could purchase music of their liking and listen at any time. It also became possible to install radio apps, changing the music world for many consumers. With services online such as Spotify and Youtube, it's very easy to obtain music and come in contact with music overall.

Figure 1 : Music Technology Timeline



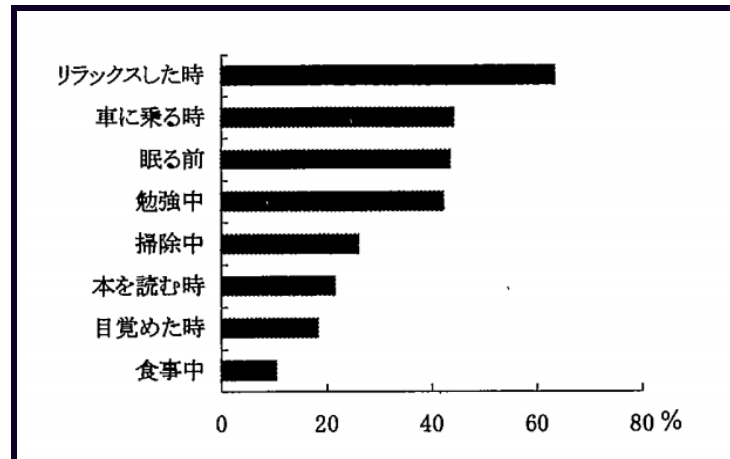
### 3.2 Music and Social Situations

According to Nielsen Music 360 Report (2018), approximately 52% of Americans go to concerts each year and about 0.3% of Japanese people go to concerts every week. Globally, the average person listens to 18 hours of music every week. Japan also has far more karaoke attractions than the U.S.

### 3.3 Music Usage in Daily Lives

A graph of a 2004 survey conducted by Okayama University can be observed in Figure 2. This survey inquired students about various situations that they might listen to music in, such as driving, relaxing, studying, before sleeping, etc. The study found that 68% of people use music to relax, followed by driving and sleeping.

Figure 2: Music Usage in Daily Lives



### 3.4 Music Education in America and Japan

In music education, the U.S. focuses on music theory and history, whereas Japan focuses more on musical expression. Japan's student life also places a large importance on school clubs, many of which are centered around music.

### 3.5 History of the Music Industry

By the end of the 1980s, large record companies dominated and phased out smaller companies. Throughout the 1990s, the music industry boomed alongside the economy and revenue peaked in 1998. However, the growing popularity of peer-to-peer file sharing and the introduction of iTunes in the 2000s caused the price of the CD to drop (Condry, 2004). To combat the falling price of CDs, the Japanese music industry began using idol group-based promotional campaigns that utilized CDs and limited-time goods in the 2010s (Hosokawa, 2007). Currently, the revenue of streaming services has

surpassed the income made through sales, while CDs still make up 68% of Japan's music industry revenue.

### 3.6

In today's music industry, record companies make contracts with potentially popular artists and provide them with production, distribution, and merchandise assistance in exchange for a certain percentage of income (Wikstrom, 2020).

Recently, the number of "indie" artists (artists that act without the support of a record company) has been increasing.

### 3.7

When comparing the Japanese and American music industries, it can be seen that the CD still has considerable strength in Japan, but the market is following the trend set in the U.S. with concerts and streaming services becoming more popular.

## **4. Research**

### 4.1 Target of Survey

For this survey we asked 75 Japanese and 75 American university students, totaling 150 participants. We had more male respondents for the American side (54%) and the Japanese side had slightly more female respondents (56%). 39% of American and 43% of Japanese respondents were Juniors, with Sophomore and Seniors following after. In regards to their musical education background, almost all Japanese respondents had musical education in elementary and middle school, whereas Americans responded that they had received about half as much. Americans did however have more self-taught music education.

### 4.2 Research Method

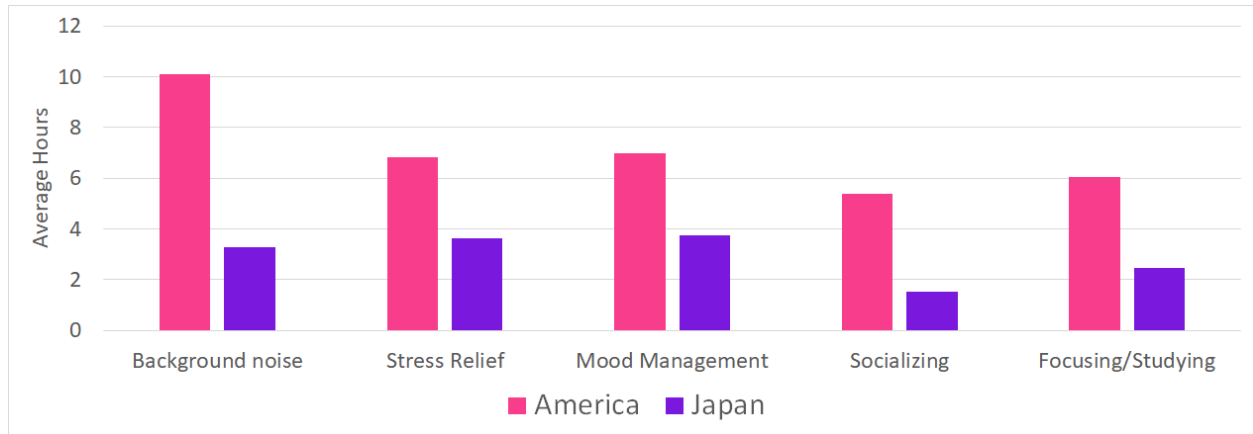
We created an online survey in English and Japanese and collected data from it.

### 5.Results of Research, Question 1

Research Question 1: How do American and Japanese college students associate with music in their daily lives and why?

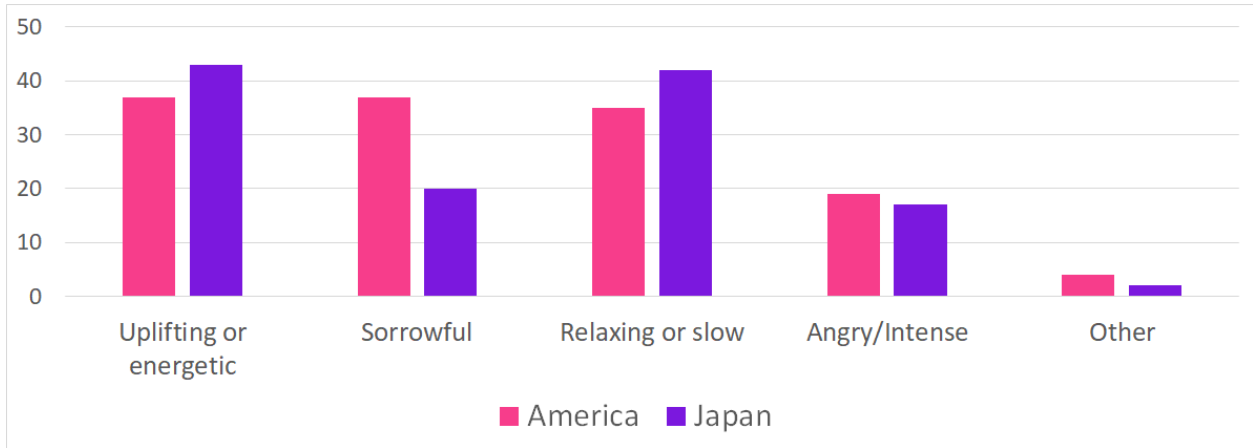
As per the results detailed in figure 3, we found that the biggest discrepancy could be observed in background noise. On average, American students listened to music as background music for 10 hours per week whereas Japanese students only listened for 3 hours per week.

Figure 3: Average time spent per scenario per week



When feeling down, American students tended to listen to a wider variety of genres; Japanese students listened to relaxing or uplifting music when they felt down (Figure 4).

Figure 4: When you are sad or feeling down, what sort of music do you listen to?



American students' music tastes were influenced by their family and friends, but Japanese students' music tastes were more heavily influenced by their friends (Figure 5.1; 5.2).

Figure 5.1: How much are your music tastes influenced by people? (U.S.)

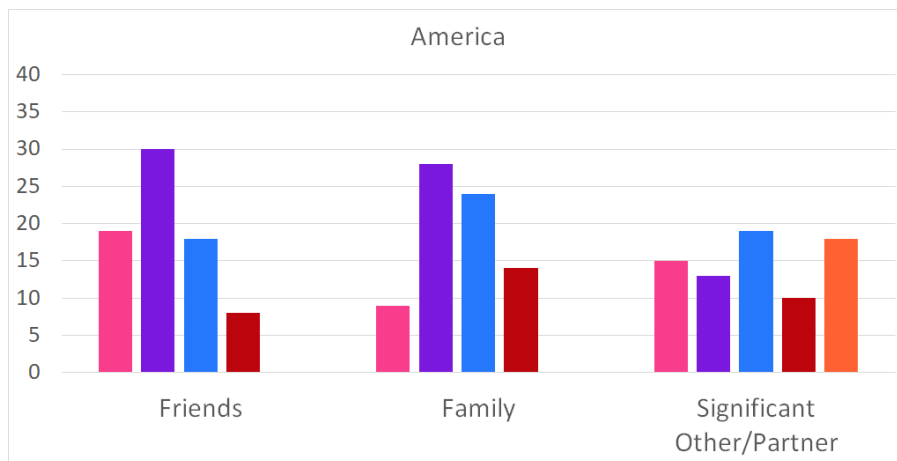
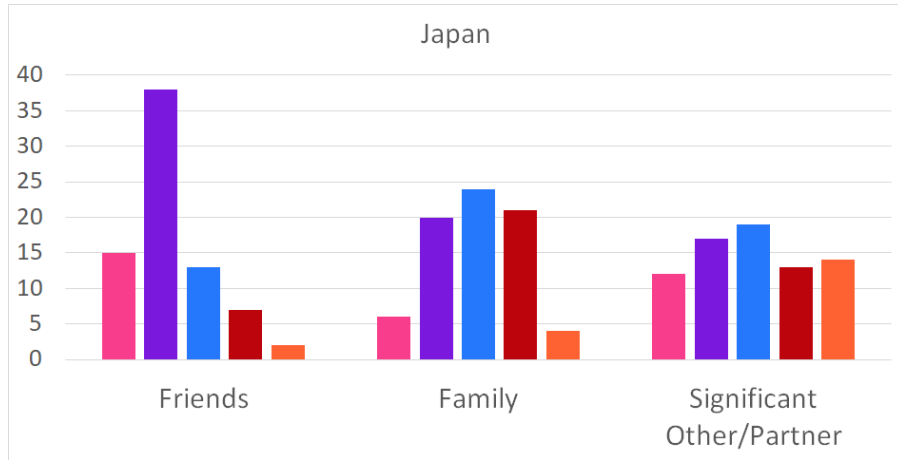


Figure 5.2: How much are your music tastes influenced by people? (Japan)



■ Significantly ■ Moderately ■ Slightly ■ Not at All ■ Not Applicable

American students most often sang by themselves, but Japanese students sang in groups or at karaoke far more often than they sang individually (Figure 6.1; 6.2).

Figure 6.1 :How often do you participate in singing activities? (U.S.)

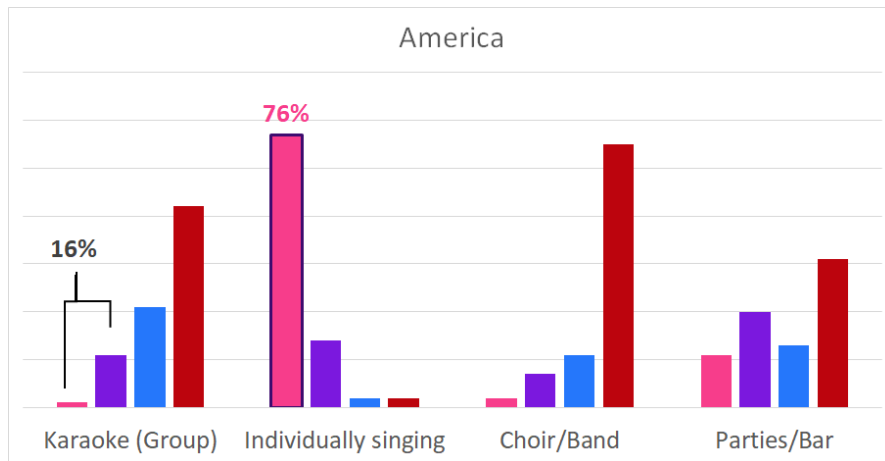
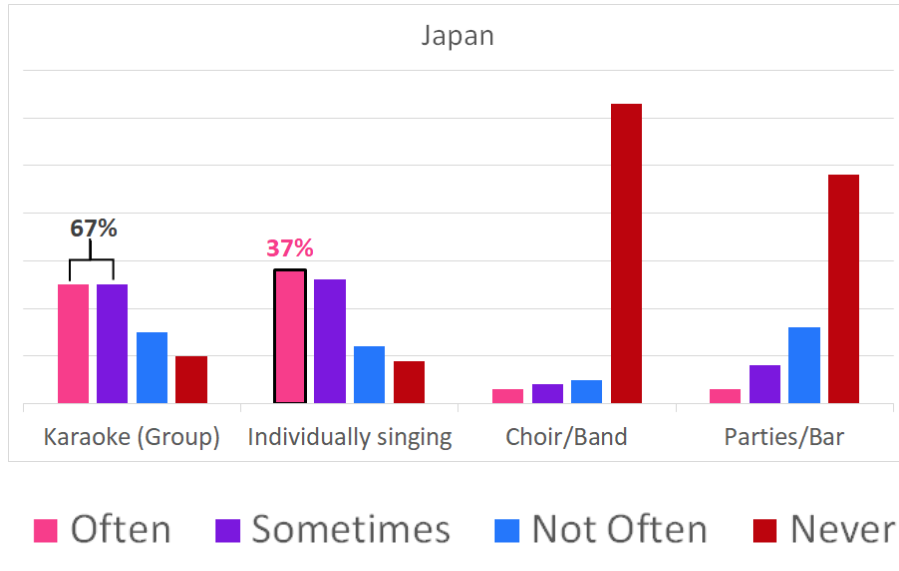


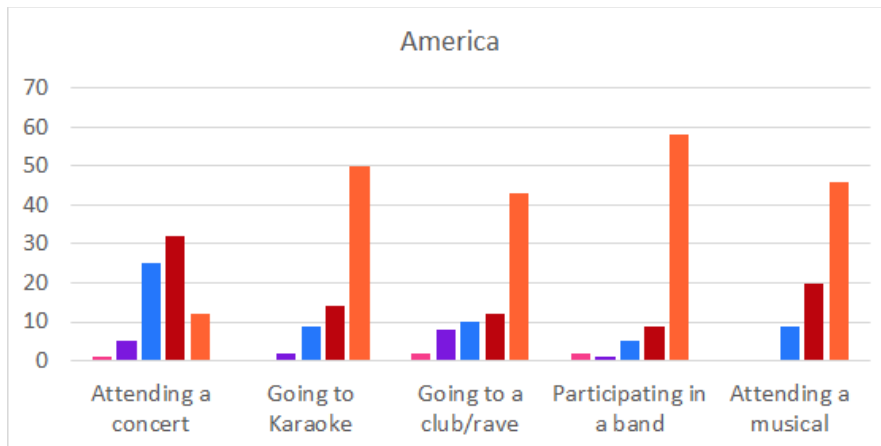
Figure 6.2:How often do you participate in singing activities?(Japan)

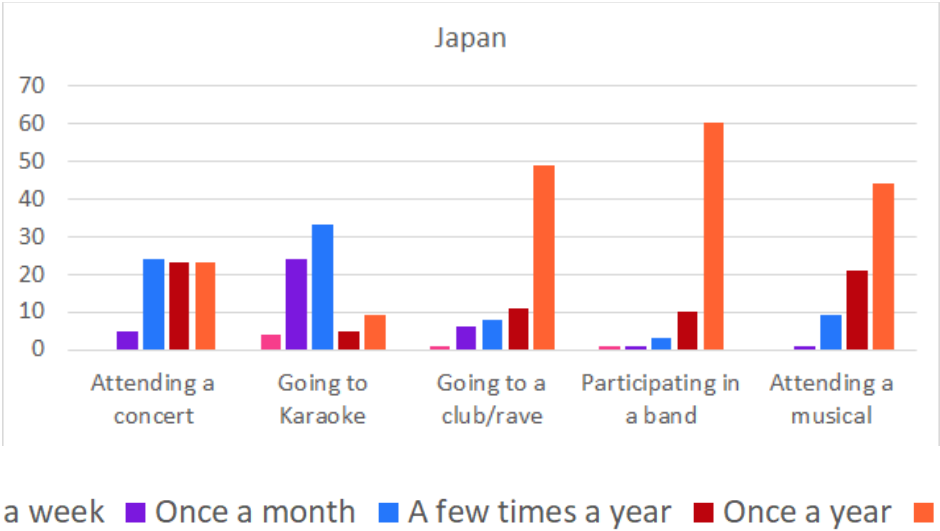




While participation rates were similar across most activities for both countries, Japanese students attended karaoke in far greater numbers (figure 7).

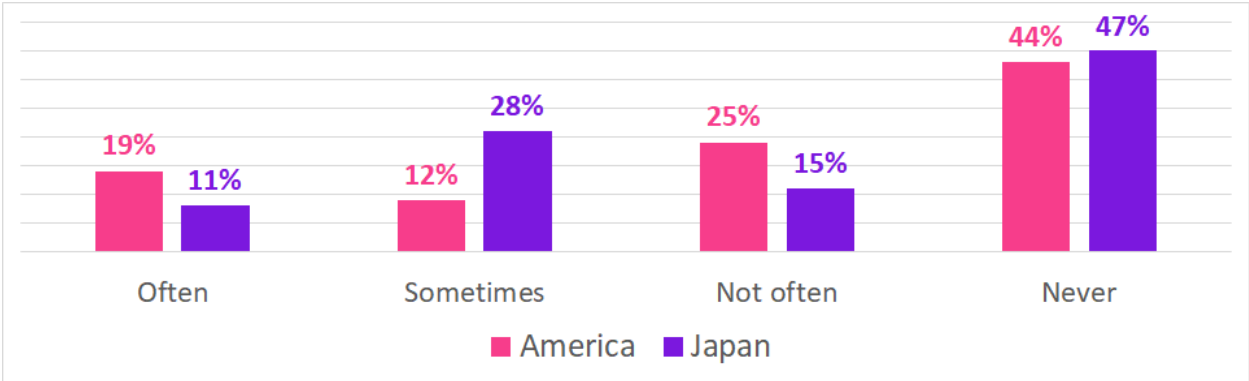
Figure 7 : How often do you participate in music social activities?





Regarding whether or not they play an instrument, as shown in Figure 8, most of the students in either country responded that they never play, or that they don't play often.

Figure 8: How often do you play musical instruments?



Research Results 1: Overview

Japanese receive music education earlier than Americans.

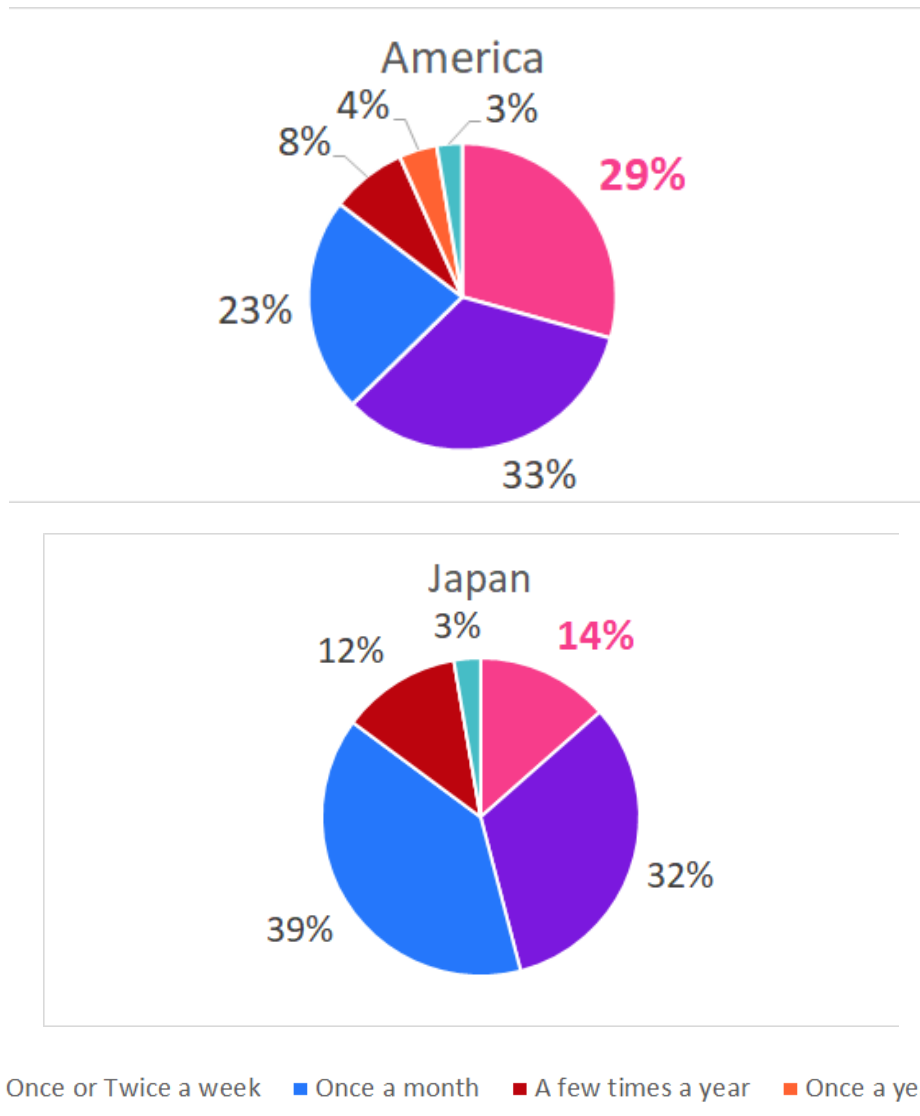
For American students, music is a more personal and individual pastime enjoyed when alone, while Japanese students enjoy music in both solitary and group settings. The preferences of Japanese students seem to be influenced more heavily by their friends.

6. Results of Research, Question 2

Research Question 2: How do American and Japanese college students consume the music that they listen to?

As shown in figure 9, American students searched for new music at a higher frequency than Japanese students.

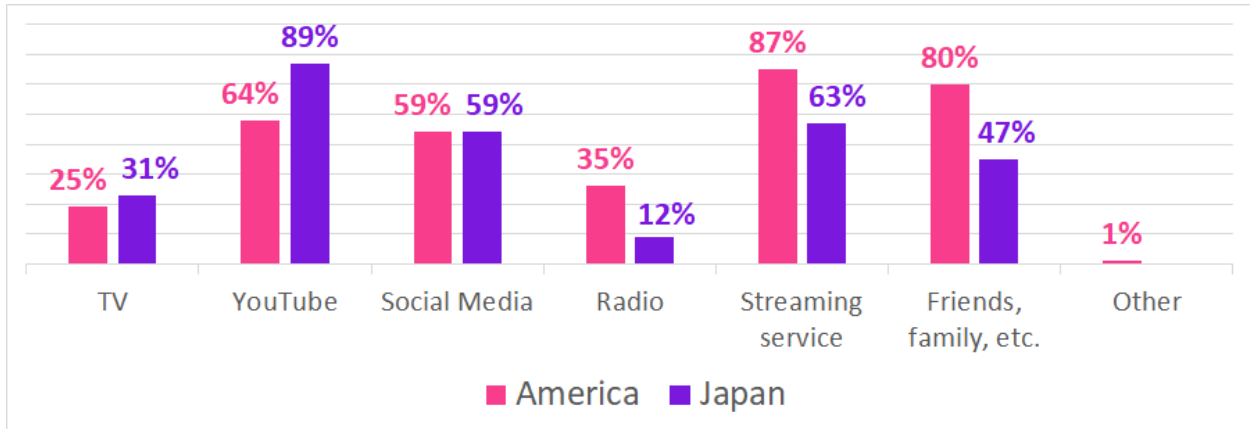
Figure 9: How often do you search for new music?



Regarding where they find their music, American students and Japanese students were quite different, with over 80% of Americans finding music from streaming

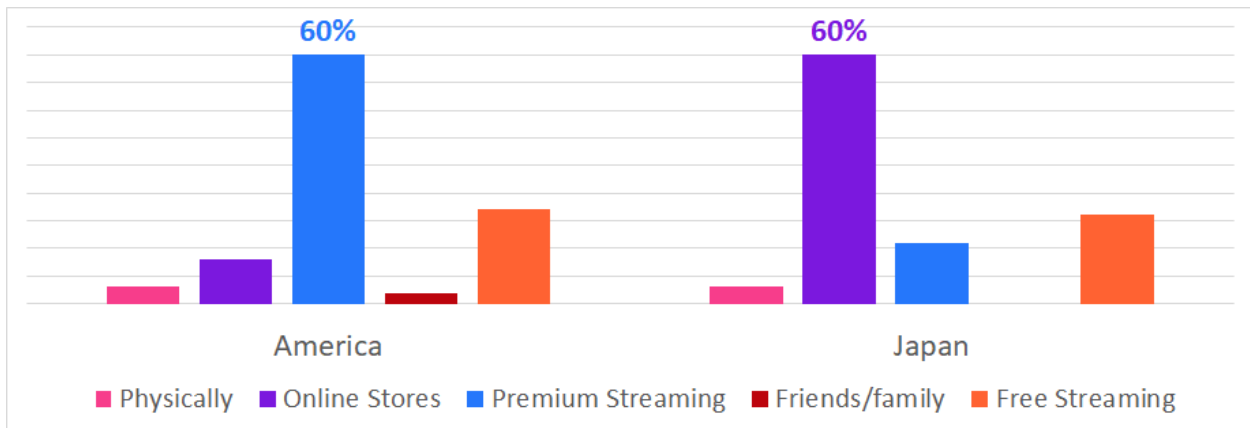
services or people they know. For Japanese students, around 90% find their music on YouTube. (Reference Figure 10)

Figure 10: Where do you find out about new music to listen to?



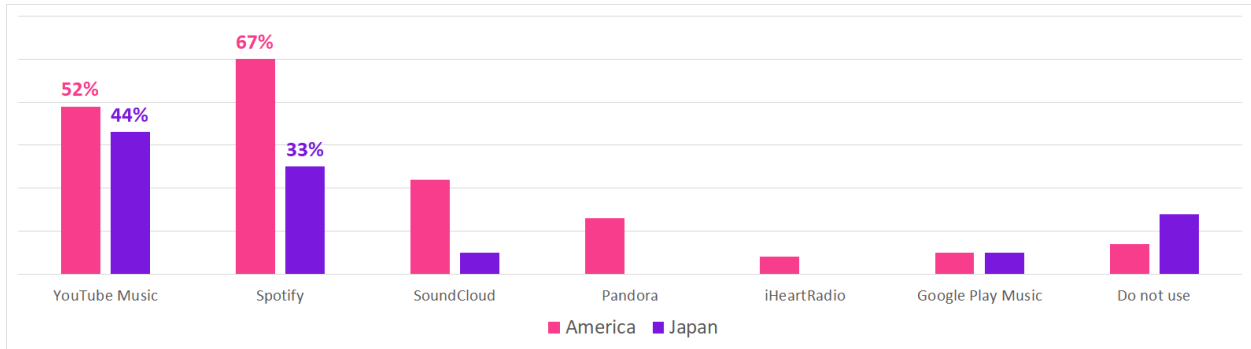
Regarding how they obtain their music, 60% of American students used premium streaming services, whereas 60% of Japanese students purchased the music itself on online stores. (Reference Figure 11)

Figure 11 :How do you acquire most of your music?



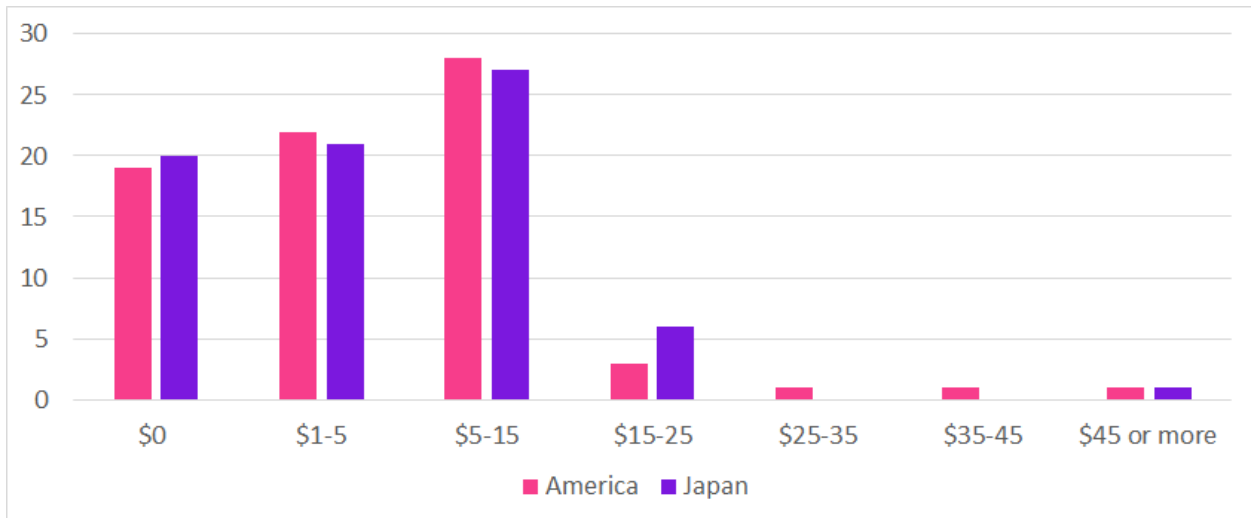
For what free streaming service they use, as shown in Figure 12 we found that over 65% of American students used Spotify, and over 40% of Japanese students used YouTube.

Figure 12: Which free streaming services do you use?



Most students, regardless of country, spent less than \$15 per month on music (figure 13).

Figure 13: Amount spent on music per month



69% of American students bought merchandise every year, and 43% of Japanese students spent no money on merchandise yearly. However, when looking at the yearly average amount spent on merchandise, Japan's average was about 20% higher. (Figure 15).

Figure 14: Amount spent per year on merchandise

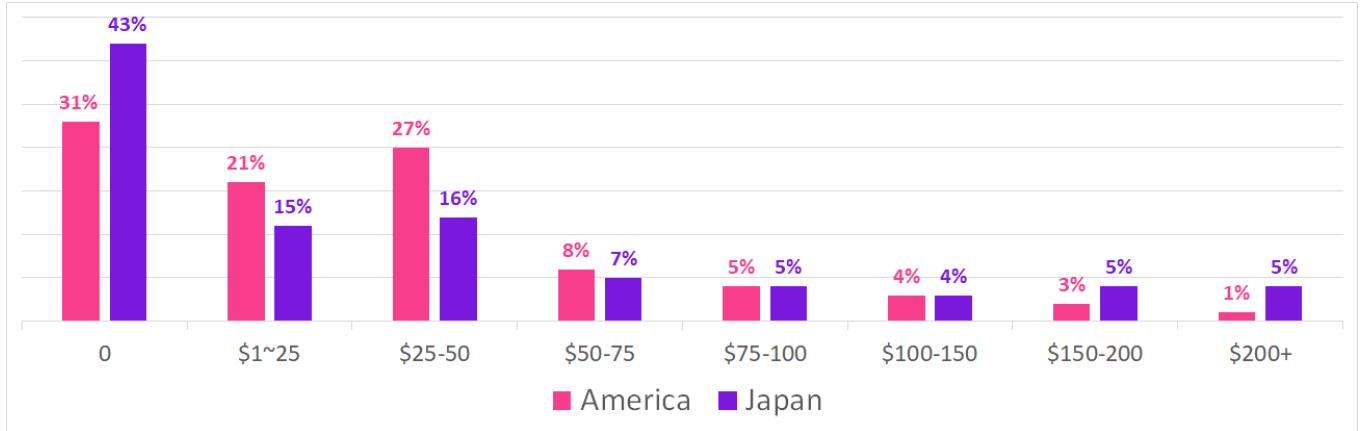
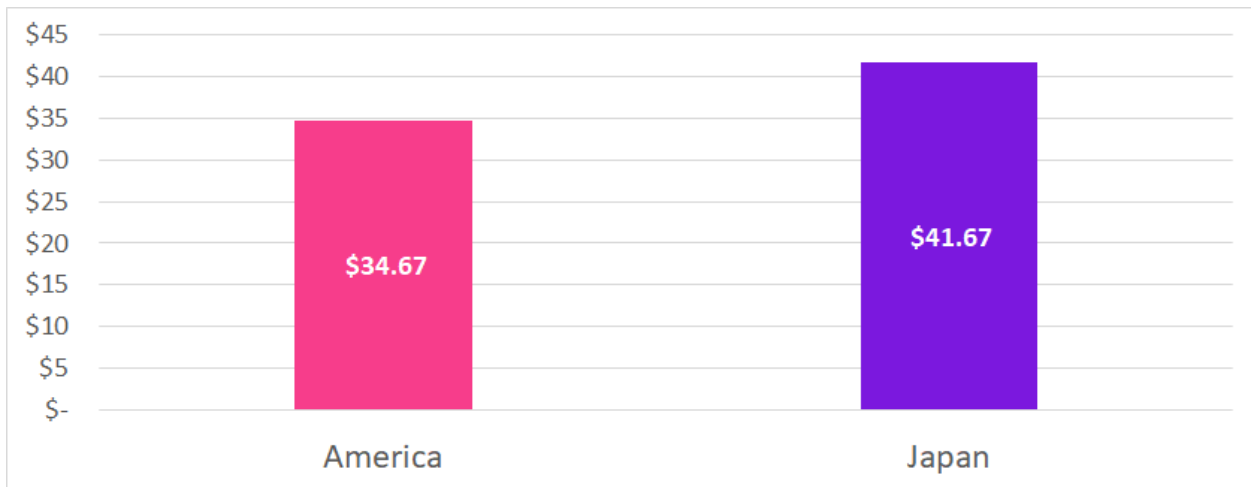


Figure 15: Average amount spent per year on merchandise



To bring all of our findings for research question 2 together, we learned that both country’s students don’t spend any more than 15 USD (Around 1500 yen) on music yearly. While Japanese students purchase music through online stores, American students seem to mostly listen to music through streaming services. It was clear that the most used free streaming service was Spotify and Youtube. Regarding the use of money, both countries purchase merchandise, but Japanese students purchase more expensive merchandise overall.

## 7. Conclusion and Discussion

Through this research, we found that while music education from middle school

onward isn't as integrated in America when compared to Japan, American students listen to music for a much longer time weekly. It could be said music has permeated their lives to a great extent. We also found that compared to Americans, Japanese students did not search for new music as much. We believe this is because American students listen to music as a personal hobby, whereas Japanese students use it as a means to connect with others. Furthermore, Americans use streaming services and do not purchase the music itself, while Japanese students bought music directly from online stores. However, because of the high CD sales currently, this result was unexpected. With this, we can see that the Japanese music industry is moving in the same direction as America's music industry has. Finally, Japanese students use more money on music and merchandise compared to Americans, but we believe that this may be because as a part of Japanese culture, Japanese people want to share the things that they like with those around them.

## **8. Limitations of the Study and Future Studies**

For the limitations of our study, If we had more respondents we could have seen a more conclusive result. The location of the respondents was also not widespread, so we cannot apply these results generically.

For future studies, we would like to compare the musical tastes of Japanese and American millennials. Another idea is to compare university student's differences in taste regarding genre and artists. Following that, a comparison in social media and its influences on how they obtain their music, as well as a comparison of the changing music industry and opinions regarding record labels are among other potential topics that we would like to research in more depth in the future.

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