

# **The Link Between Fast Food and University Life: Comparing Japan and the United States**

**Jovon Hutchins  
Jessica Negin**

**Advisors:  
Dr. Yoshiko Saito-Abbott  
Dr. Shigeko Sekine**

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# Significance of the Study

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- During our time in **Japan** and **America**, **fast food** appeared to be an integral part of the university student diet.
- We wondered why **Japan** has similar types of **fast food** to **America**, but American fast food seems to be more **unhealthy**.
- With this **capstone**, we wanted to explore how university students perceive fast food based on their home countries. We also wanted to explore how fast food influences their daily lives.

# Research Questions

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1. How do Japanese and American university students **perceive** fast food?
2. How does fast food influence university students' **eating habits and diet**?

# Research Background Outline

- a. Definition of Fast Food
- b. History of Fast Food Restaurants
- c. Culture and Perceptions of Fast Food
- d. Consumer Values on Food
- e. Fast Food Consumption
- f. Fast Food Restaurants Based on Popularity
- g. Fast Food Nutrition by Country
- h. Psychological Factors on Fast Food Consumption
  - Stress
  - Decision Fatigue
- i. Media and Advertisements
  - McDonald's Japan
  - Taco Bell America
  - McDonald's Japan

# Definition of Fast Food

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*A variety of fast food logos*

- Food that can be prepared and served quickly
- Food specifically from establishments categorized as “fast food restaurants”

# History of Fast Food Restaurants

## America

- **First US Automat**  
1902  
(<http://maxsielaff.de/>)
- **A&W**  
1919  
([http://www.awrootbeer.com/aw\\_history.php](http://www.awrootbeer.com/aw_history.php))
- **Krispy Kreme Donuts**  
1937  
(<https://www.krispykreme.com/about/Our-Story>)
- **McDonald's**  
1948  
(Skrabec, 2012)

## Japan

- **Yoshinoya**  
1958  
(<https://www.yoshinoya.com/>)
- **A&W**  
1963  
(Crago, 2015)
- **KFC, Domdom Burger, and Dunkin' Donuts**  
1970 (<http://japan.kfc.co.jp/company/history.html>),  
(<http://www.orangefoodcourt.co.jp/domdom/history.html>)  
(Palmer)
- **McDonald's**  
1971  
(<http://www.mcdonalds.co.jp/company/outline/enka.html>)

America's fast food industry developed early on, and after the American occupation of Japan, it took over Japan's fast food industry as well.

# Culture and Perceptions of Fast Food

<b>America</b>	<b>Japan</b>
Americans have been socialized around fast food culture since the <b>1950s</b>	The Japanese have been socialized around fast food culture since the <b>1960s</b>
Fast food is often cited as a <b>completely American invention</b>	<b>Generation Gap:</b> Older → Fast Food is <b>foreign</b> Younger → Fast Food is <b>uniquely Japanese</b>
The American diet was <b>transformed</b> by fast food; it is now one of the <b>biggest industries in the US</b>	A cultural shift where <b>convenience and instant gratification</b> have overtaken other social values

(Rappoport, 2003; Traphagan & Brown, 2002; Schlosser, 2001)



# Consumer Values on Food

America	Japan
1. Taste	1. Mood
2. Price	2. Safety
3. Nutrition	3. Weight Control
4. Convenience	4. Convenience
5. Weight Control	5. Price

Some consumer **needs**, or **desires** have a tendency to be **transformed as income allows** (i.e. college students have less money to spend on food, and therefore eat fast food)

(Lavoie, 1994, as cited in Jussaume & Higgins, 1998)

(Glanz et. al., 1998)

(Asakawa & Okano, 2013)

# Fast Food Consumption











Percentage of People Who Eat Fast Food Once a Week



*Americans  
tend **to eat  
fast food  
more  
frequently**  
than  
Japanese  
people.*

(Japan - average fast food consumption per week, 2016)  
(Gallup, 2013)

# Fast Food Restaurants Based on Popularity

America	Japan
1. Chick-fil-A 	1. McDonald's 
2. Chipotle 	2. Mister Donut 
3. Panera Bread 	3. MOS Burger 
4. Papa John's 	4. KFC 
5. Pizza Hut 	5. Subway 

(Bowerman, 2015)

(Dinh, 2013)

# Fast Food Nutrition by Country

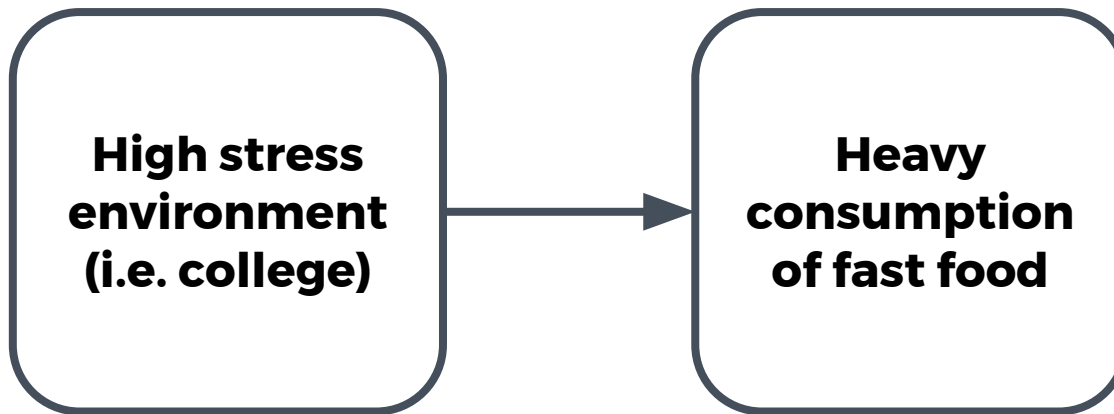
Item	America	Japan
<b>McDonald's: Big Mac</b> (mcdonalds.com) (mcdonalds.co.jp)	540 Calories 28g Fat 950mg Sodium 46g Carbohydrates	530 Calories 28.2g Fat 970mg Sodium 41.9g Carbohydrates
<b>Subway: Subway Club</b> (subway.com) (subway.co.jp)	310 Calories 4.5g Fat 840mg Sodium 46g Carbohydrates	295 Calories 6.4g Fat 993mg Sodium 41.5g Carbohydrates
<b>Burger King: Whopper</b> (bk.com) (burgerkingjapan.co.jp)	630 Calories 38g Fat 810mg Sodium 49g Carbohydrates	750 Calories 48.8g Fat 884mg Sodium 50.1g Carbohydrates

American fast food tends to have more **calories** and **carbohydrates**, while Japanese fast food tends to have more **fat** and **sodium**.

# Psychological Factors on Fast Food Consumption: Stress

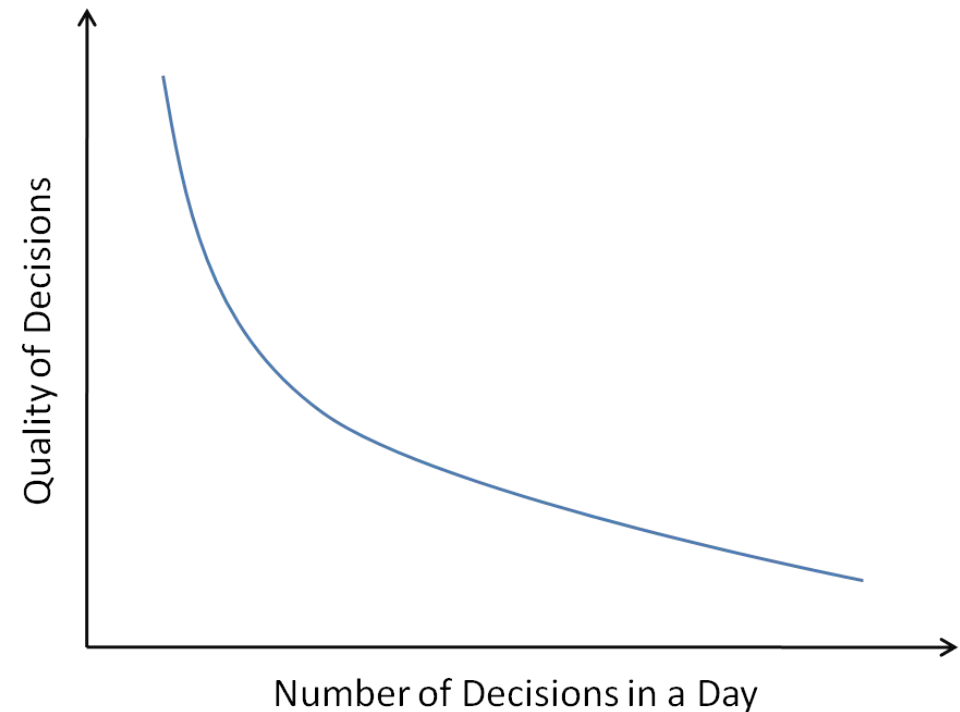
Numerous studies have found that stress can lead to eating foods with **higher fat, sugar, and calorie content**, all of which apply to **fast food**

(Lattimore et al., 2004; Sulkowski et al., 2013; Errisuriz et al., 2016)



- ❖ **Cravings** are also increased during times of **stress**
- ❖ Most **cravings** are triggered by **fatty and sugary foods** (Chao, 2015)

# Psychological Factors on Fast Food Consumption: Decision Fatigue



Consumption can be influenced by numerous **psychological factors**

- One of these factors, ***decision fatigue***, can make us more prone to eating fast food later in the day

(Danziger et al., 2011)

# Media and Advertisements

- Media and advertisements in both America and Japan tend to focus on **younger generations**

(Orciari, 2013; Iwase, 2010)



An advertisement for “Makku de DS”



An advertisement for a McDonald's campaign featuring popular children's characters



# Media and Advertisements:

## McDonald's Japan



- McDonald's marketed the “**kurozu chicken mcwrap**” specifically towards **teen and college females**. The “kurozu” (black vinegar) was marketed as a **beauty treatment product**.
- **Yuri Ebihara** (a Japanese model), was used to advertise it because she not only appealed to male audiences, but because she was also considered flawless by many younger females.

(Iwase, 2010)



*The Kurozu wrap*



*Yuri Ebihara*



# Media and Advertisements:

## Taco Bell America



- Taco Bell had a campaign focused on **dieting**
  - Christine Dougherty, the spokeswoman, claimed to have **lost 54 pounds** eating items from the Fresco Menu five times a week

(Park, 2010)



*Christine Dougherty advertising the "Drive-Thru Diet"*

# Media and Advertisements: McDonald's Japan

McDonald's Japan launched a campaign encouraging **children and teens** to come in with their Nintendo DS devices to get special discounts, food, and games (among other features)

(Iwase, 2010)



A "Makku de DS" advertisement

# Research Method

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## Participants:

Total of 63 University Students

- 28 Japanese University Students
  - 19 Female, 9 Male
- 35 American University Students
  - 23 Female, 10 Male, 2 Agender

## Research Instrument:

Online Survey ([Japanese](#) - [English](#))

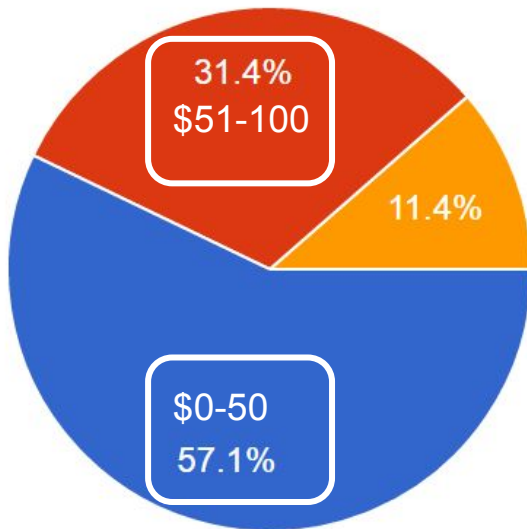
- Google Forms

# Findings for Research Question 1

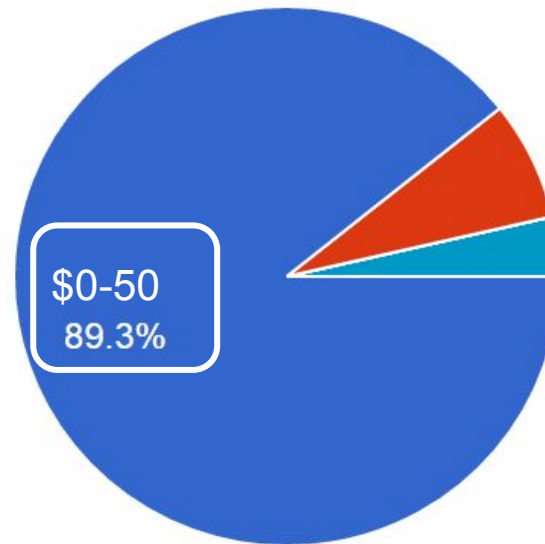
How do  
Japanese  
and  
American  
university  
students  
**perceive**  
fast food?

# How much do you spend monthly on fast food?

## America



## Japan

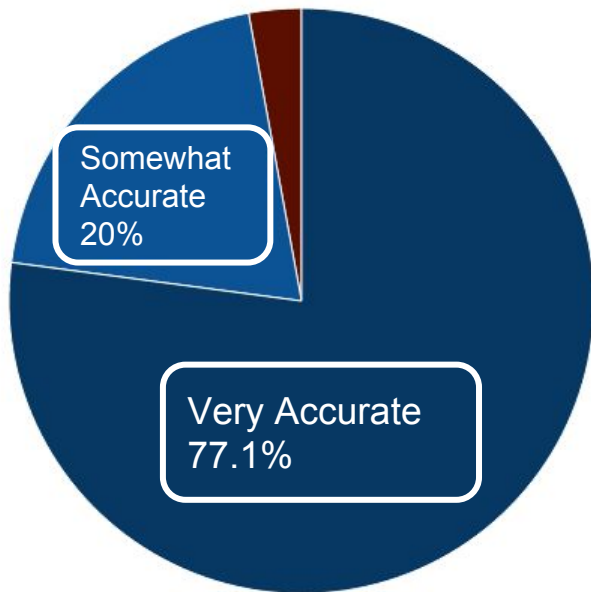


- \$0-50
- \$51-100
- \$101-150
- \$151-200
- \$200+
- Not sure/can't tell
- Other

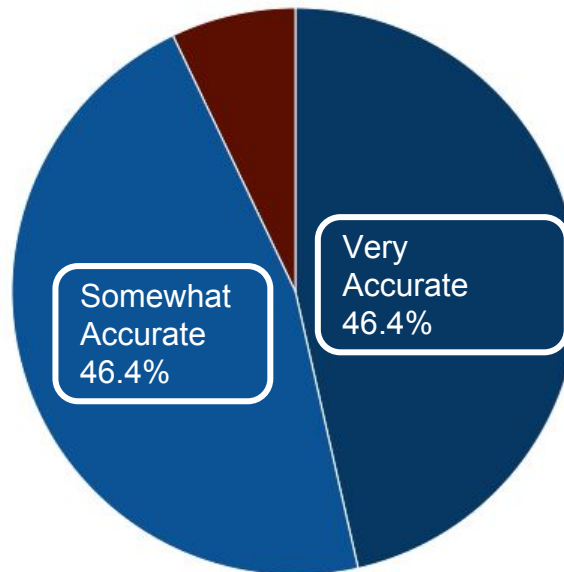
On average, the **majority** of Japanese students spend **less than \$50** on fast food in a month. However, the **majority** of American students spend **between \$0-100** a month on fast food.

# How do you rate the following statement: “Fast food is high in calories and low in nutritional content.”

## America



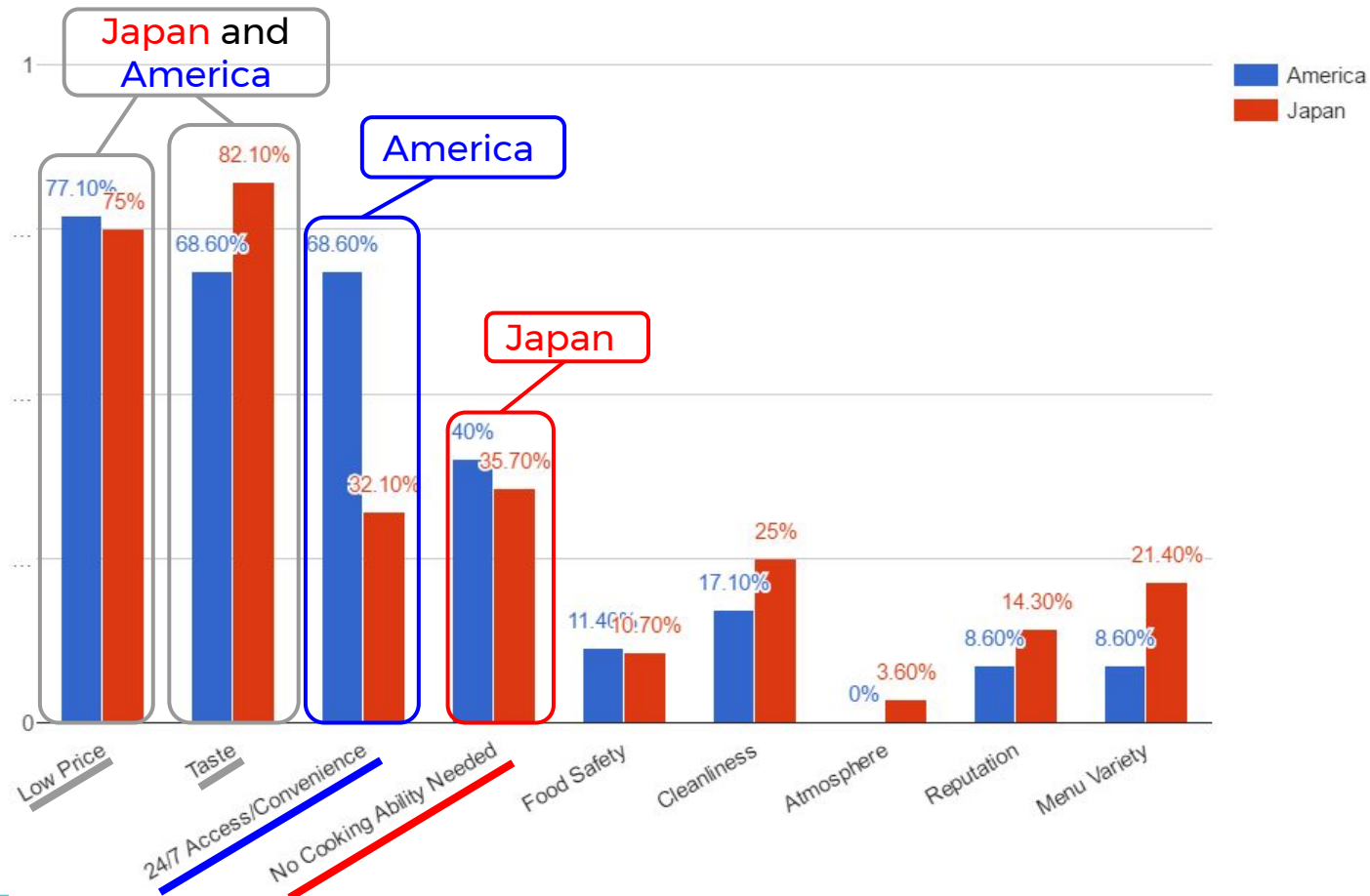
## Japan



- Very Accurate
- Somewhat Accurate
- Somewhat Inaccurate
- Very Inaccurate

The **majority** of American and Japanese students believe that fast food items offer **little in nutritional content and are high in calories.**

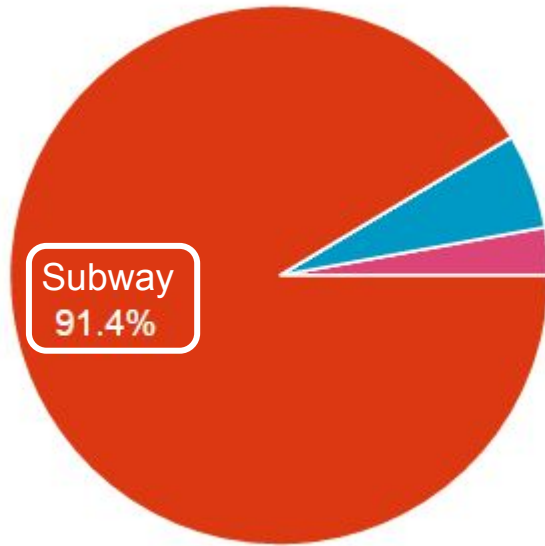
# Please choose which 3 factors are most important to you about fast food.



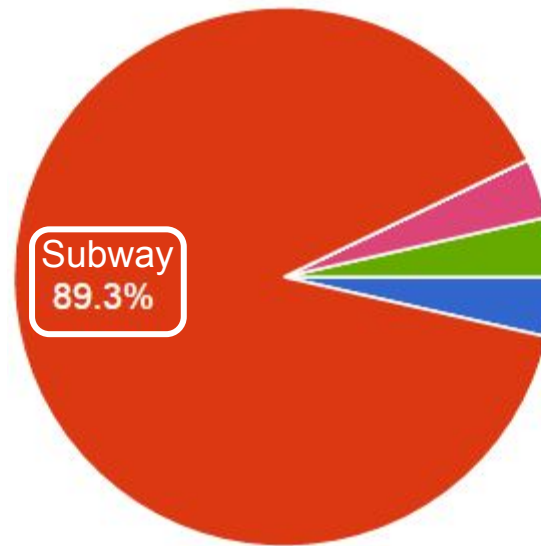
Both Japanese and American students believe that **low price** and **taste** are important in fast food. However, American students prefer **24/7 access**, while Japanese students **prefer no cooking ability needed**.

# Please choose which fast food restaurant you believe is the healthiest.

## America



## Japan



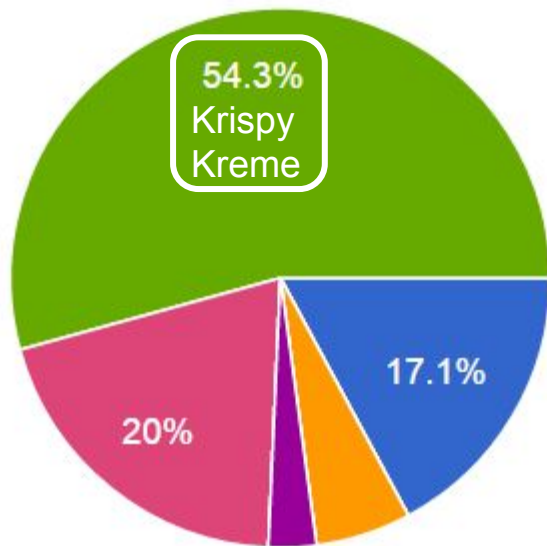
- McDonald's
- Subway
- Domino's Pizza
- Burger King
- Pizza Hut
- Wendy's
- KFC
- Krispy Kreme

The **majority** of Japanese and American students believe that **Subway** is the healthiest option among fast food restaurants.

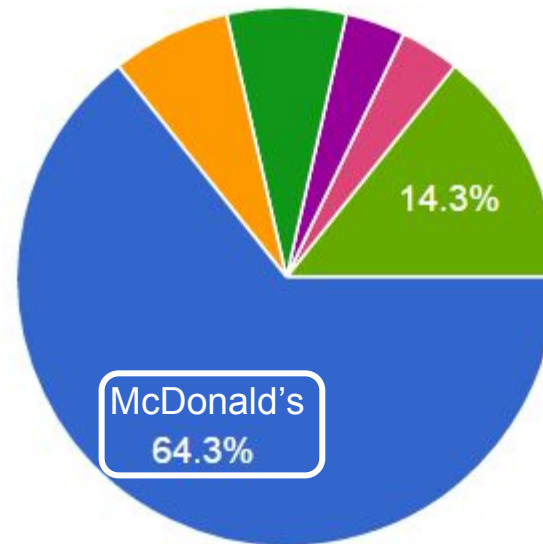


# Please choose which fast food restaurant you believe is the least healthy.

## America



## Japan

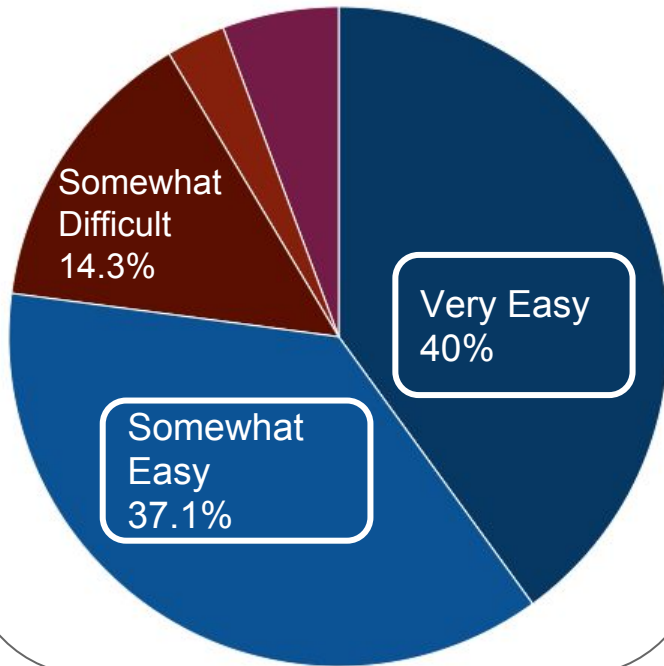


- McDonald's
- Subway
- Domino's Pizza
- Burger King
- Pizza Hut
- Wendy's
- KFC
- Krispy Kreme

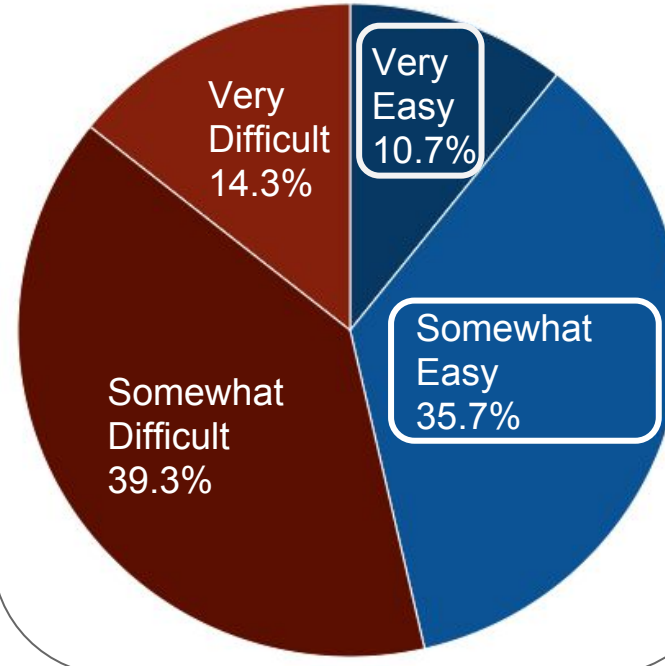
**54.3%** of American students believe that **Krispy Kreme** is the most unhealthy, while **64.3%** of Japanese students believe that **McDonald's** is the most unhealthy.

# In your respective country, how easy is it to find caloric information about foods served at these restaurants?

## America



## Japan

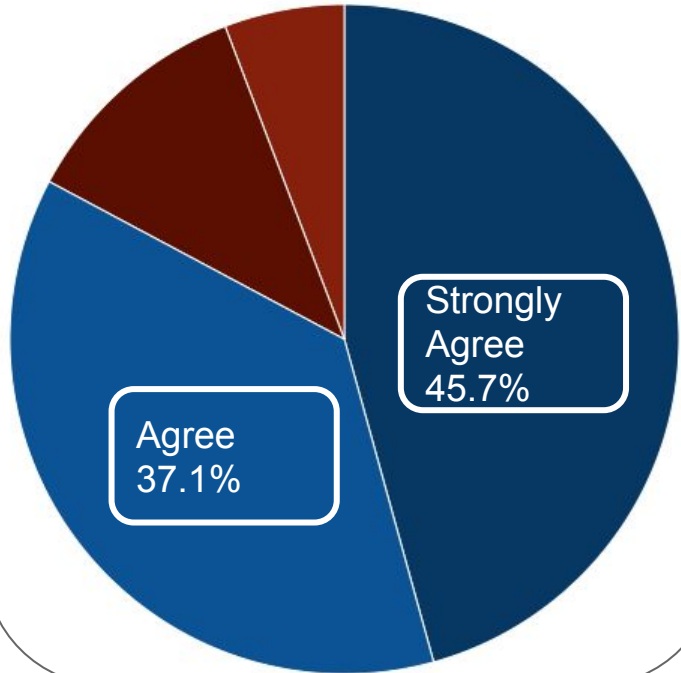


- Very Easy
- Somewhat Easy
- Somewhat Difficult
- Very Difficult
- Never Asked About

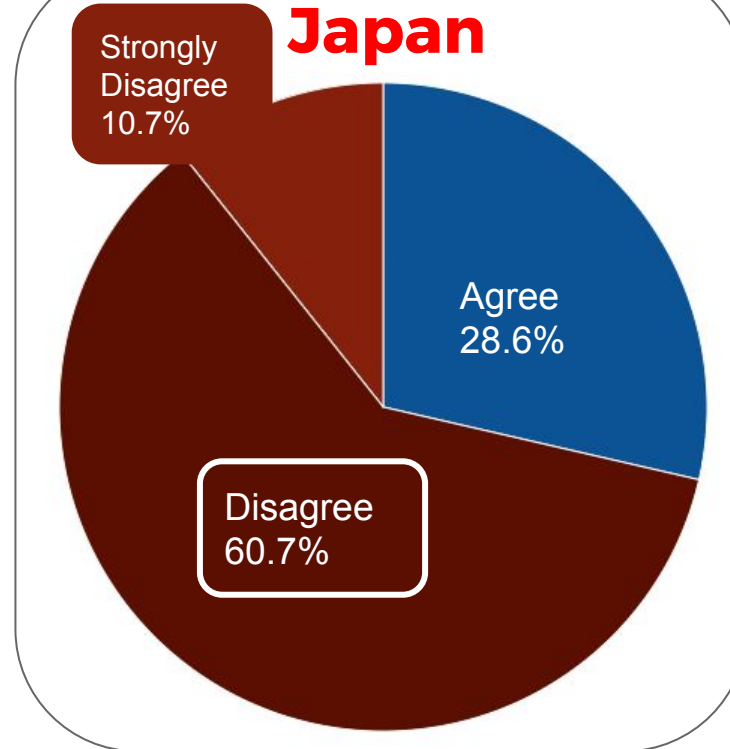
**77.1%** of American students believe that it's relatively easy to find caloric information at fast food restaurants, compared to **46.4%** of Japanese students.

# I feel that some fast food restaurants specifically target college students with their advertisements.

## America



## Japan



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**82.8%** of the American students **agree** that advertisements specifically target college students, while **71.4%** of the Japanese students **disagree**.

# Research Findings 1 Summary

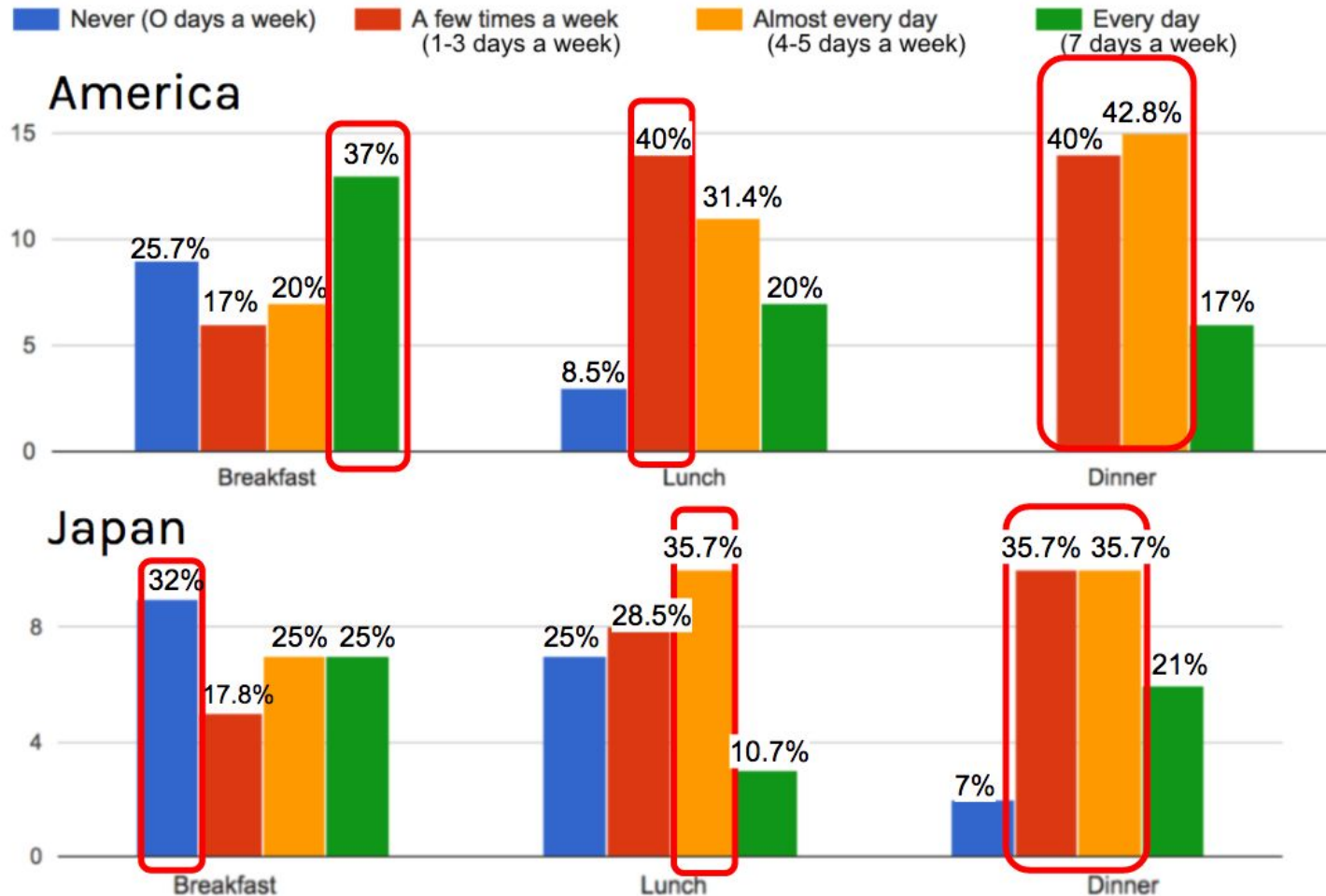
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1. **Both groups** of students agree that **fast food offers little to no nutritional value**, however, **calorie information** on these foods is **easier to find in the US**.
2. **American students spend more on average** than Japanese students, and feel like American fast food advertisers **target their age group more**.
3. Each group has **different beliefs** on what fast food establishments are more **unhealthy**, however, there is a consensus that subway is the most healthy possibly due to the fact that high amounts of vegetables are more common among their sandwiches.

**Findings for  
Research  
Question 2**

How does  
fast food  
influence  
university  
students'  
**eating  
habits  
and diet?**

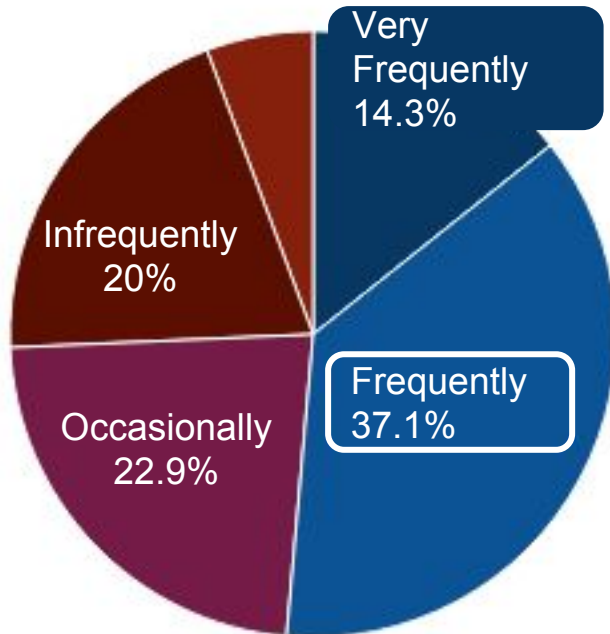
# How many times in a week do you eat home-cooked meals?



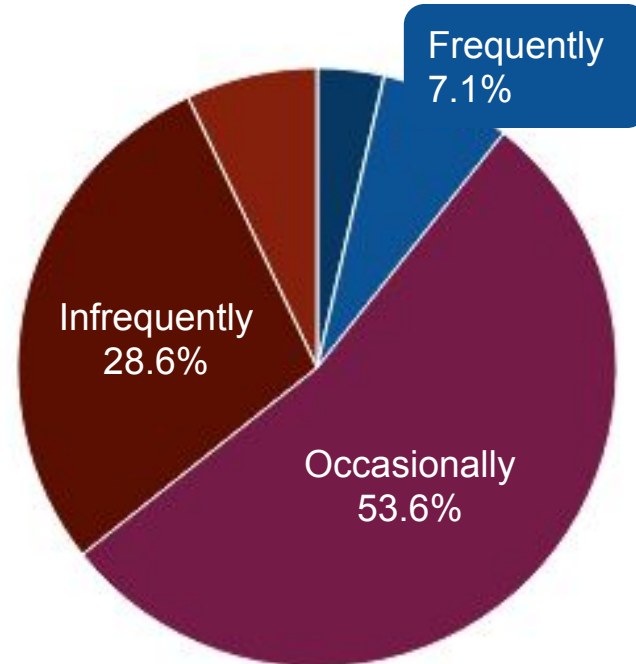
Japanese students tend not to eat home-cooked meals for breakfast, however, both American and Japanese students eat home-cooked meals with about the same frequency for lunch and dinner.

# How often do you eat fast food?

## America



## Japan

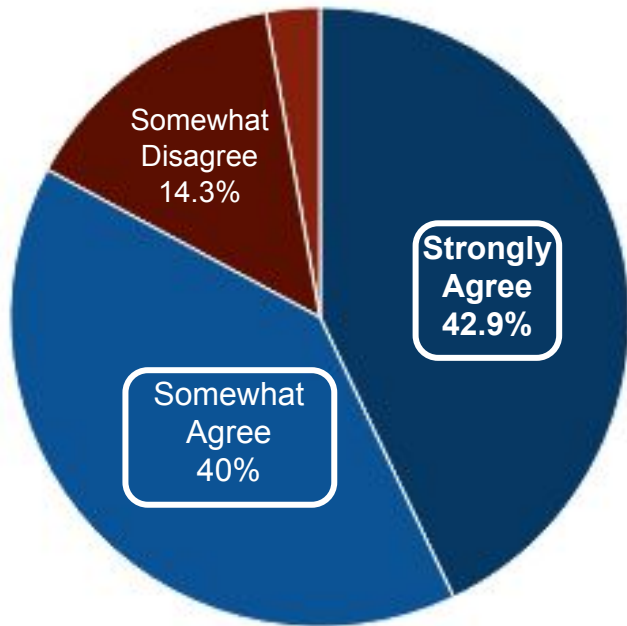


- Very Frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Infrequently
- Very Infrequently

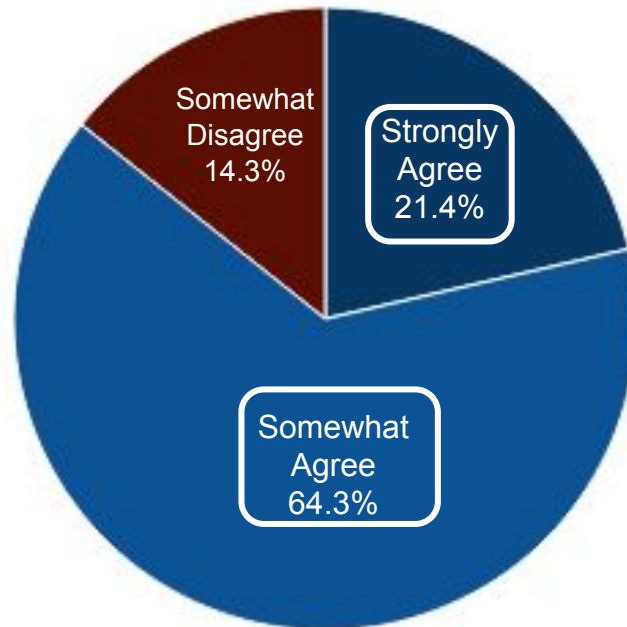
American students eat fast food **more often** than Japanese students.

Please rate how you feel about this statement: "I eat fast food and it directly affects my diet and body image."

## America



## Japan



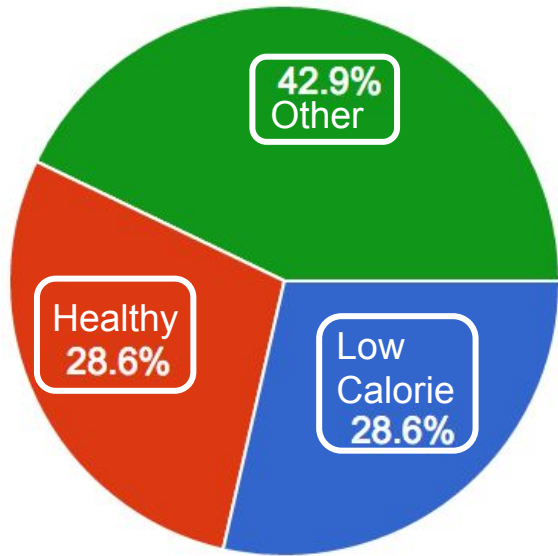
- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Both** American students and Japanese students feel that **fast food affects their diet and body image**, but Japanese students feel more strongly that it affects them.

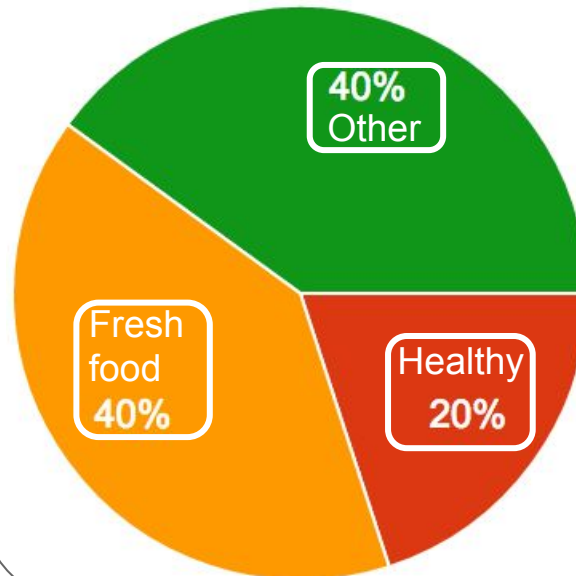


If you chose "somewhat disagree" or "strongly disagree" in regards to the statement in the previous question, please indicate why.

## America



## Japan



- Low calorie options are available at fast food restaurants
- Healthy options are available at fast food restaurants
- Fresh food options are available at fast food restaurants (i.e. "Wendy's fresh never frozen beef")
- Other

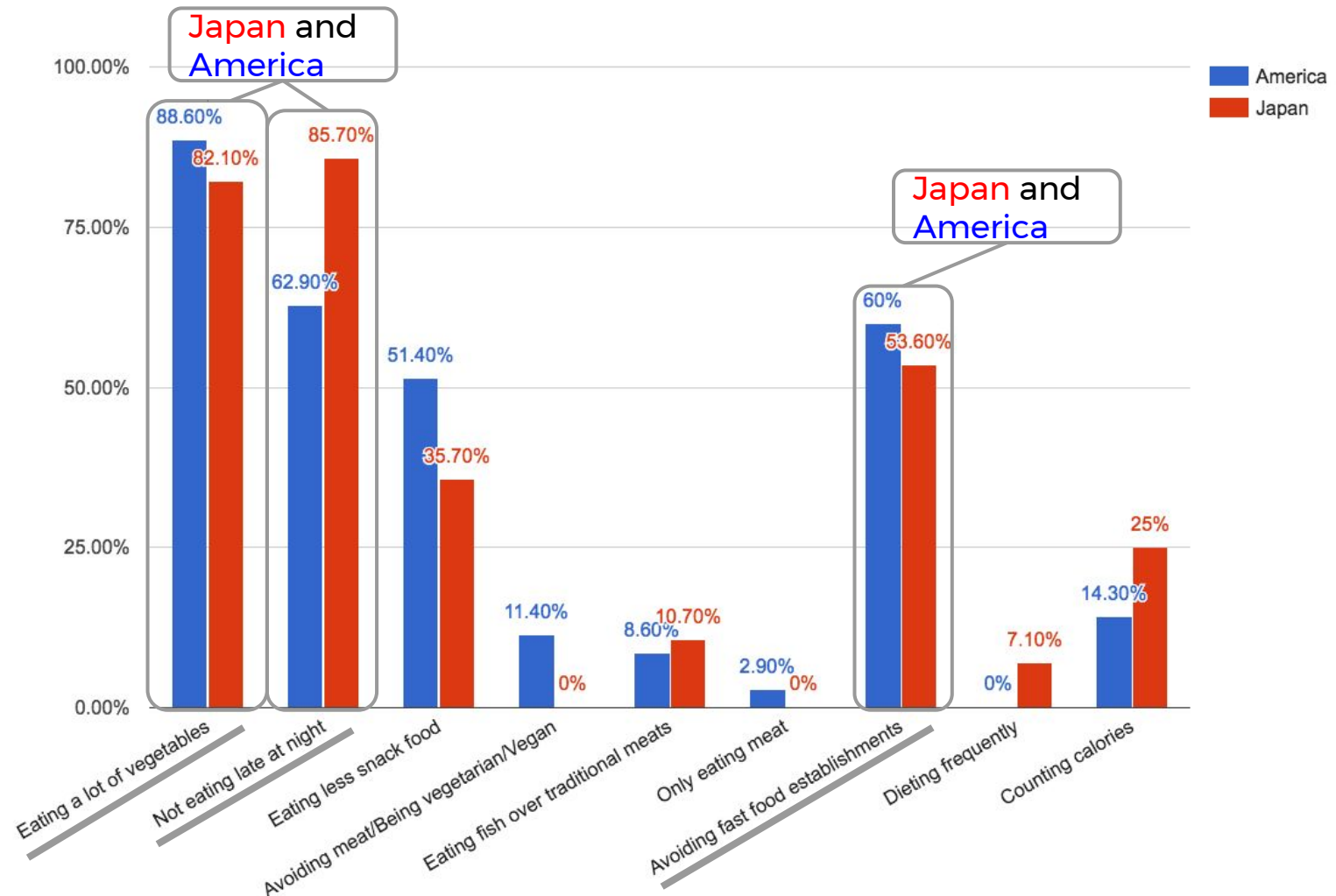
American students believe that **healthy** and **low calorie** options are available, while Japanese student believe that **healthy** and **fresh options** are available.

If you chose "somewhat disagree" or "strongly disagree" in regards to the statement in the previous question, please indicate why. (Cont.)

<i>America</i>	<i>Japan</i>
"As long as it is sparingly, I think there is no problem."	"I am careful about what I eat for other meals."
"My fast metabolism"	"Because I do not think it will affect me if I eat fast food in moderation."

These responses indicate that both American students and Japanese students believe **moderation can counteract the negative effects** of fast food.

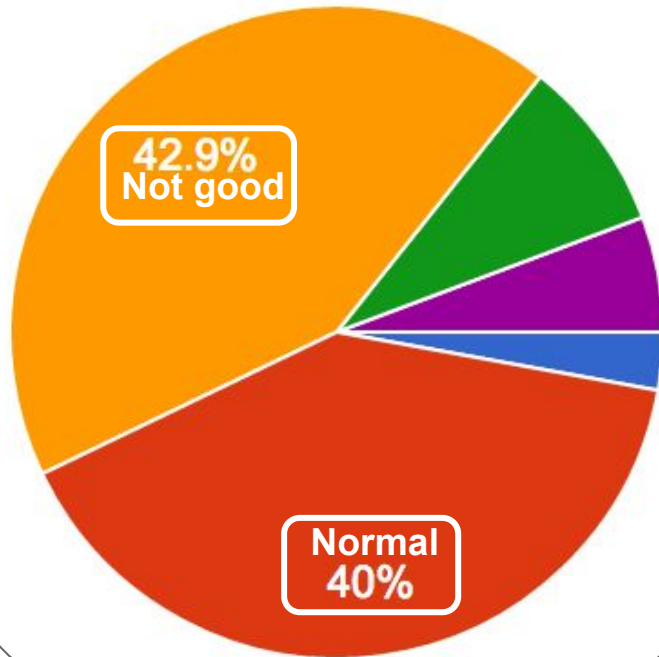
# What do you consider as being healthy?



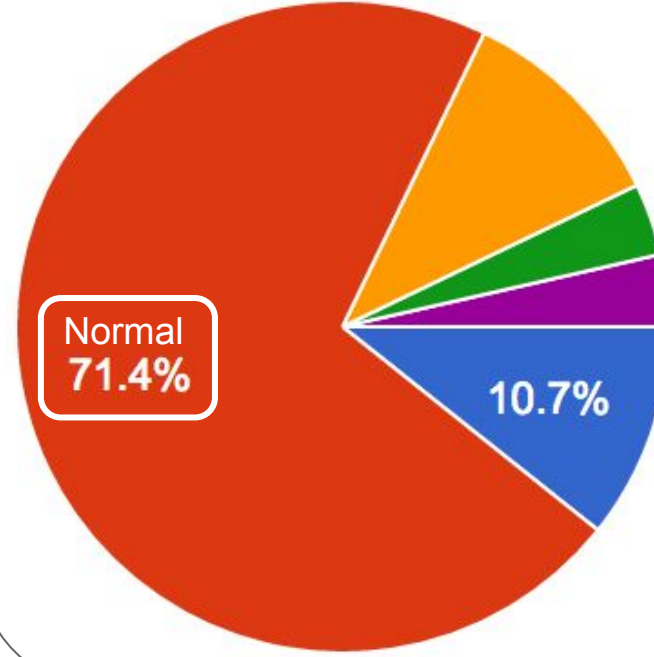
American students and Japanese students both believe that **eating a lot of vegetables**, **not eating late at night**, and **avoiding fast food** are ways of being health conscious.

# How do you physically feel after eating fast food?

## America



## Japan

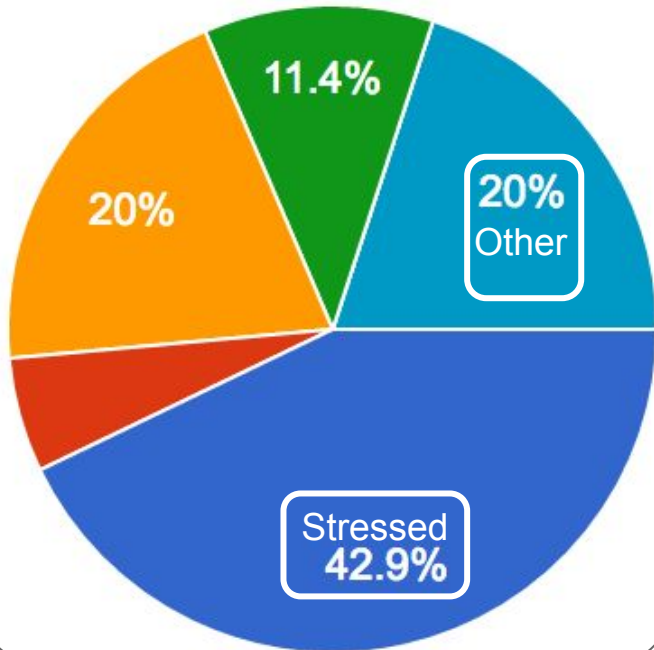


- Good
- Normal
- Not good
- Sick
- Not sure

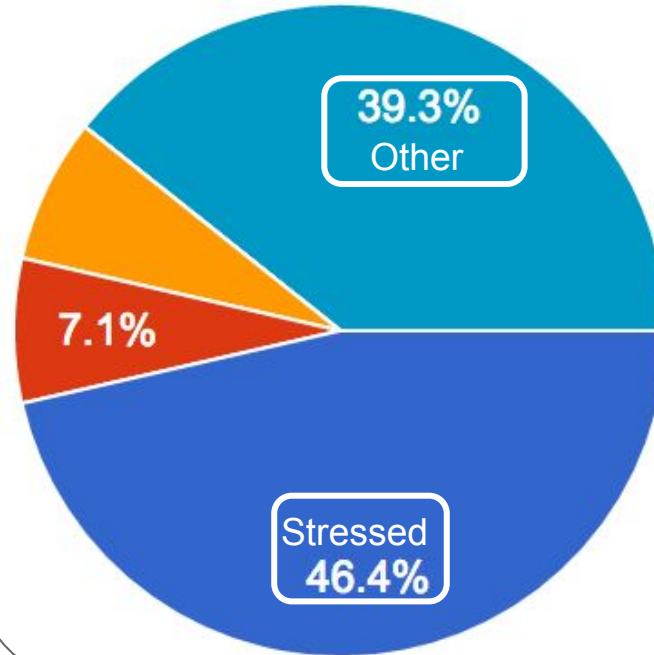
American students physically feel worse after eating fast food than Japanese students.

# When do you want to eat fast food the most? When I'm:

## America



## Japan



- Stressed
- Happy
- Rewarding myself
- Depressed
- Lonely
- Other

American students and Japanese students most want to eat fast food when they're **stressed**.

# When do you want to eat fast food the most? When I'm: (Cont.)

## *America*

“Don't want to cook”  
“When I'm too sick to cook”

“Lazy”  
“Tired”

## *Japan*

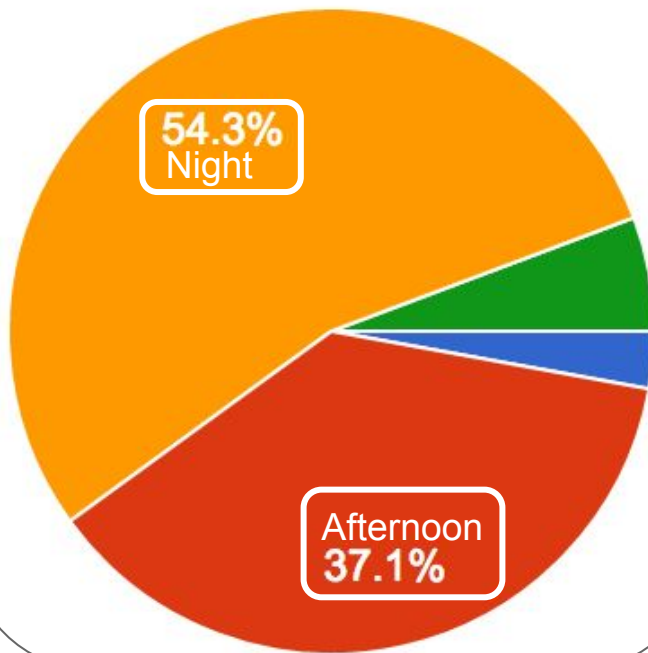
“When I have no time.”  
“When I want to finish eating quickly while I'm out.”

“When I am hungry/very hungry”

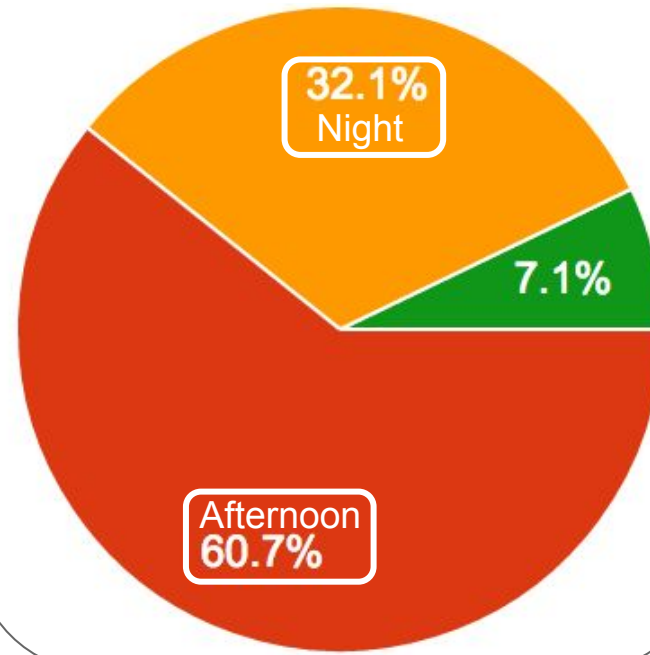
These responses indicate that **time and access** are very important to Japanese students, while American students value that they **do not have to cook themselves**.

# When, over the course of a day, are you most likely to eat fast food?

## America



## Japan



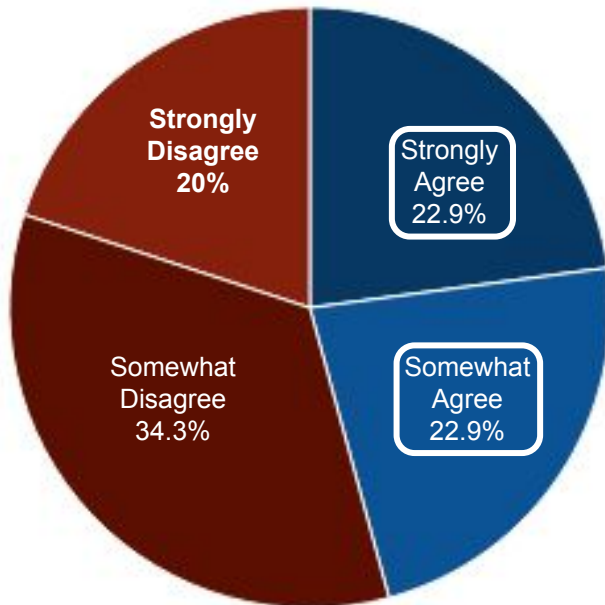
- Morning
- Afternoon
- Night
- After midnight

American students are more likely to eat fast food at **night**, while Japanese students are more prone to eat it in the **afternoon**.

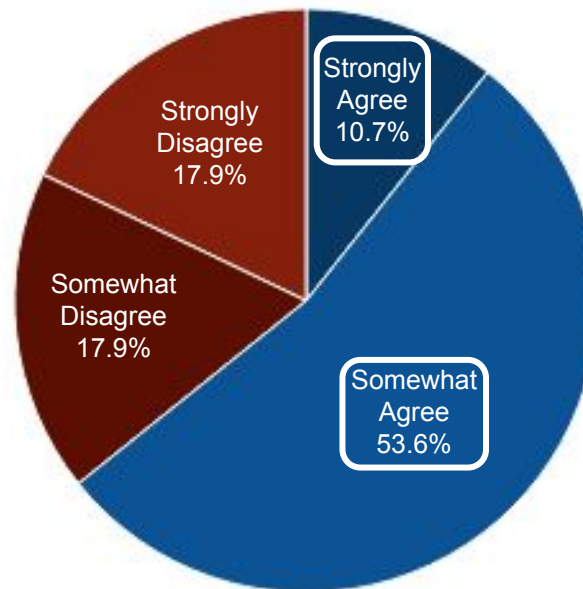


**“If there were a healthier, tastier, but more expensive fast food restaurant, I would want to go to it.”**

## America



## Japan



- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Japanese students are more willing to **pay more for healthier fast food options** than American students.



# Research Findings 2 Summary

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1. American and Japanese students both believe that fast food **affects their eating habits, diet, and body image**
  - a. Japanese students believe it **affects their bodies more**, but American students claim that they **physically feel worse** after eating it
2. Japanese and American students' views on health are similar, however, **moderation** seems to be the key in regards to **lessening the effects of fast food** on the body
3. **Stress** is the main motivator for fast food consumption in both groups of students

# Conclusion

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1. American students **eat fast food more often**, but both Japanese and American students **agree that fast food has negative health effects**. However, both groups continue to eat fast food despite its **negative aspects**; most likely due to **stress**.
2. Japanese students are more likely to **pay more for healthier fast food options**. **Cost** is the most significant factor when choosing to eat fast food for both groups of college students.
3. Concepts of healthiness are **similar**, but concepts of things that are **unhealthy** are **quite different**.
  - High **sugar content** in American foods
  - A lack of vegetables in the Japanese diet

# Limitations of the Study and Future Studies

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## Limitations:

- Small number of respondents, mostly female
- More American respondents than Japanese respondents
  - It is difficult to generalize the results

## Future Studies:

- More in-depth research on fast food's effect on the body
- Find out why concepts of unhealthy food are different in America and Japan
  - Ask what is “healthy and unhealthy”
- Equalize the number of male and female respondents

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**Any questions?**