

# Awareness and Perceptions of Gender Issues and Feminist Concepts by U.S. and Japanese Female College Students

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# Significance of the Study

- We grew up during the age of “Girl Power”. During our childhood we were exposed to many **empowering** concepts for women.
- While **studying abroad** new questions about feminism outside of the United States were raised.
- Since we felt that Japanese women may have not been exposed to the same concepts as we had we wondered how they **perceived** feminist concepts.
- We want to understand what female university students perceive as feminism and if there are still **ongoing equity issues** for women in society that need to be addressed.

# Research Questions

1. What do female university students perceive about feminism?
2. What are the ongoing equity issues for women in their society that need to be addressed?

# Research Background Outline

- Defining “Feminism”
- Equity Issues for Women
- Voting Rights
- Government Representation
- Workplace Equality
- Reproductive Rights

# Defining Feminism

Feminism maintains **three general ideologies**:

- 1.** The need to **recognize** and **disseminate** the historical exploitation and oppression of women
- 2.** The goal of improving women's social standing while working toward **equality** for all genders and groups
- 3.** The **active criticism** of traditional intellectual pursuits and gender ideologies

# Perceived Characteristics of Feminists

## POSITIVE TERMS

Desirability

Sexiness

Confident

Independent



## NEGATIVE TERMS

Undesirability

Plainness

Stubborn

Angry

Individuals are likely to change their **identification** as Feminist/Non-Feminist depending on their **exposure** to certain characteristics about Feminists.

# Comparison of Opinions about Feminism

## Feminist's opinions

## Non-Feminist's opinions

Supports  
Gender Equality

Is Female

Has Positive Personal  
Characteristics

Promotes Gender  
Equality in Society

Rejects Traditional  
Gender Roles

Supports  
Female Superiority

Dislikes Men

Has Negative Personal  
Characteristics

Discriminates based  
on Gender

# Equity Issues for Women

Lack of Access to Education

Clothing restriction

Equality rights at work

Domestic violence

Sexual assault

Advancement of Women to the Government

Abortion

Reproductive rights

Sexual harassment

Voting Rights

# 4 Research Points

- Voting Rights
- Government Representation
- Workplace Equality
- Reproductive Rights

# History of Voting Rights for Women



Right to  
Stand for Election



1788



Right to Vote



1920

Right to Stand  
Stand for Election & Vote



1946

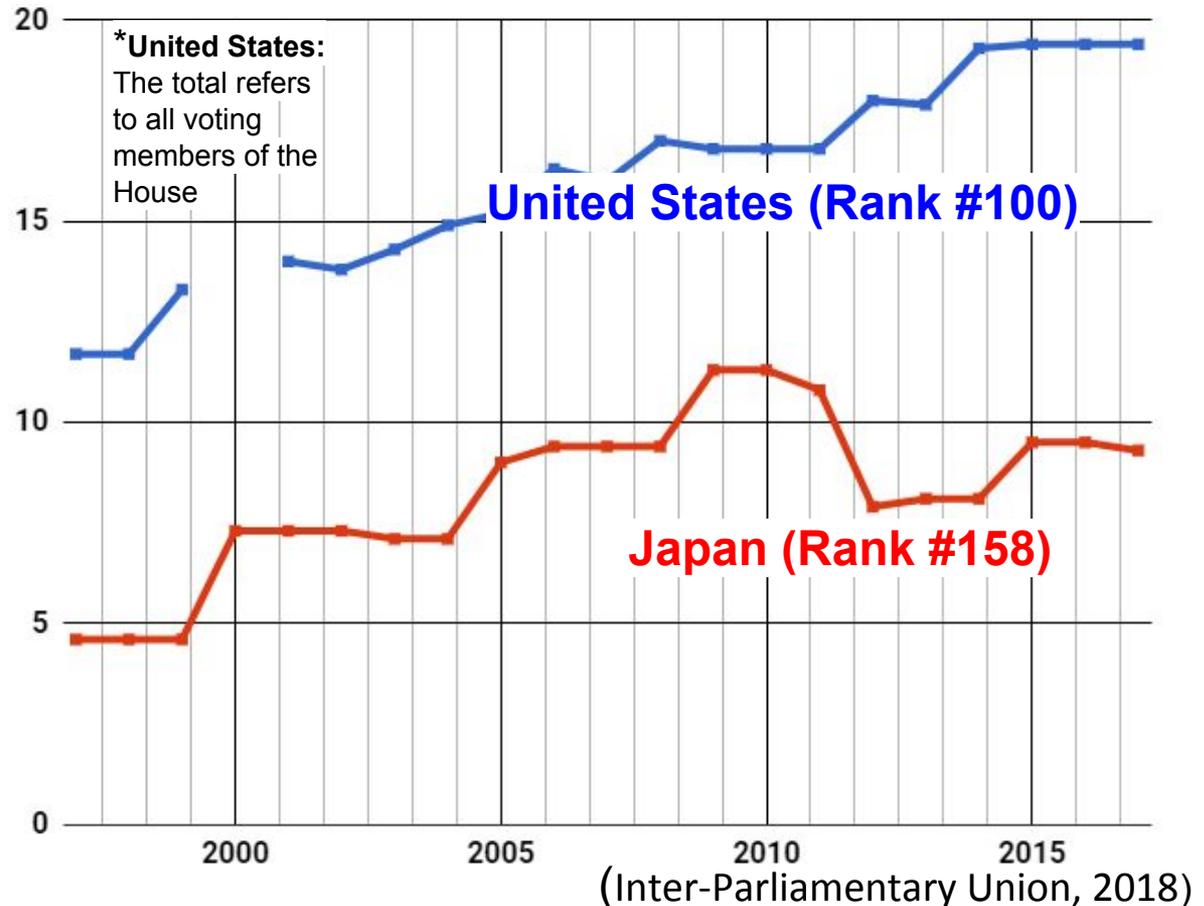
**Japan** is behind the **U.S.** in terms of women's right to vote and ability to stand for election in government positions

(Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018; IPU Archive Women's Suffrage, 2018)

# Women in National Parliaments (1990-2017)

Percentage of parliamentary seats in a single or lower chamber held by women.

**U.S. is ahead of Japan in terms of representation.** However, out of the entire list of 193 countries, the U.S. and Japan are similarly ranked.



# Government Representation

Overall, women in politics have a positive effect on society



- Women in political roles:
  - **Inspire** female citizens' political engagement
  - Increase women's political knowledge

(Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006)



- Women candidates seen as:
  - **morally** superior to their male counterparts
  - agents of **change** focusing on social issues

But still seen as **lacking** political ability

(Lee & Lee, 2016)

# Workplace Equality:

laws passed in the U.S.A. before Japan



1963

**The Equal Pay Act**  
Requires men and women to be given Equal Pay for Equal Work



1964

**Title VII**  
Prohibits Employment Discrimination  
Support for Maternity Leave



1986

**Equal Employment Opportunity Law**  
Prohibits Gender Discrimination



2016

**The Act on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace**

(U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2018)

# Workplace Equality: Benefits of Laws

- Elimination of barriers:
  - Height and weight requirements
  - Rules against hiring mothers
  - Denial of overtime work to women
- Haruko Arimura (politician) who helped pass the Japan 2016 law says:
  - *“For the first time ever we are talking not about if women should be in charge, but how.”*

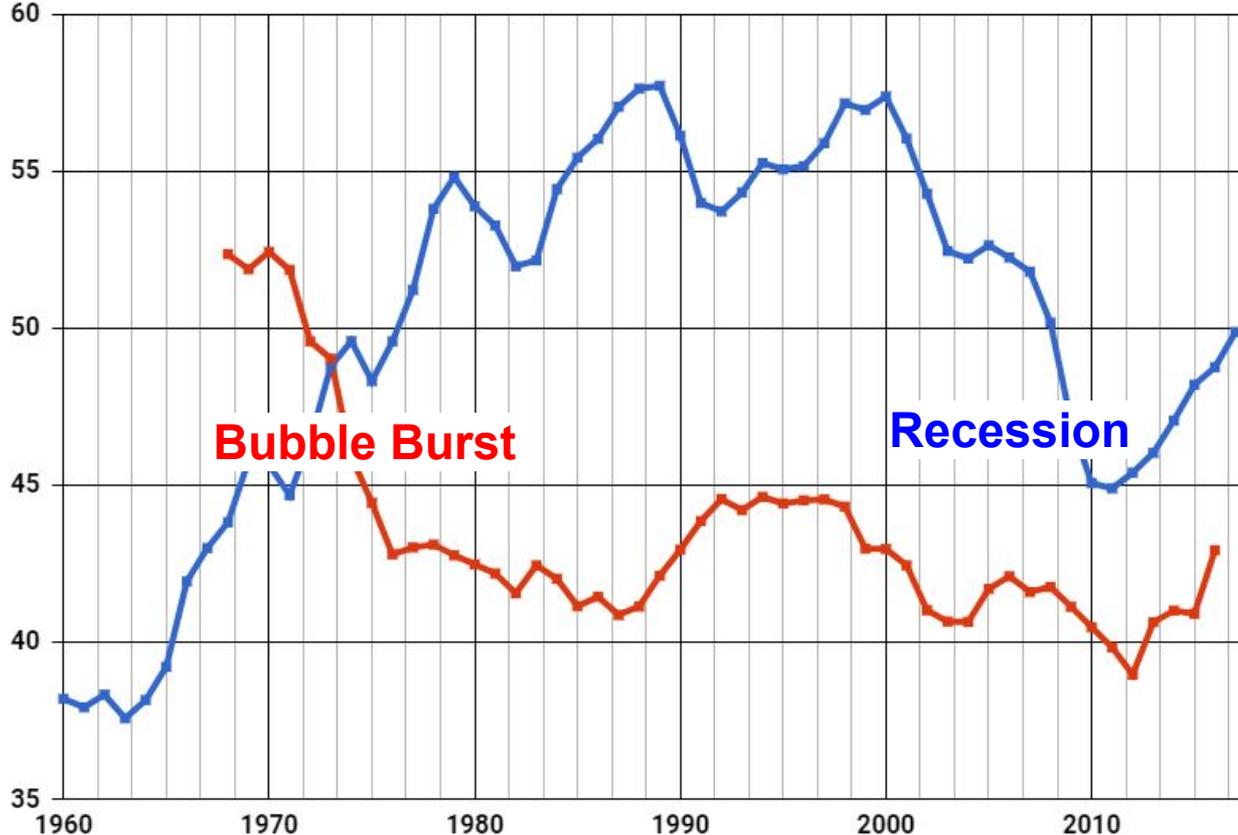


Haruko Arimura

After Equal Rights Laws passed, **both** U.S. & Japan had  
Rise in Employment Rate of Women ages 15-24.

# Increased Employment rates of Women

Employment to population ratio, ages 15-24, female (%) (nat'l estimate)



■ United States

■ Japan

**U.S.** - an increase in young women's employment after the Equal Pay Act (1963)

**Japan** - a slight effect after their equality acts in 1986 and 2016.

# Reproductive Rights



## More women:

- waited to have children
- waited to marry

## Increase of:

- # women in workplace
- annual hours worked by women

(Bailey, 2006)

- **No** effect to career or birth rate
- Responded **positively**
- Women in their 20s most likely to use
- Favorable but hesitant to inquire about its use and **side effects on health.**

(Kihara,2001; Negishi, 1999 )

More **American** women joined the **workforce** while there was mostly no effect on **Japanese** women who were more concerned about their **personal health.**

# Research Method

## Participants:

- Total of 60 Female University Students

## Demographics:

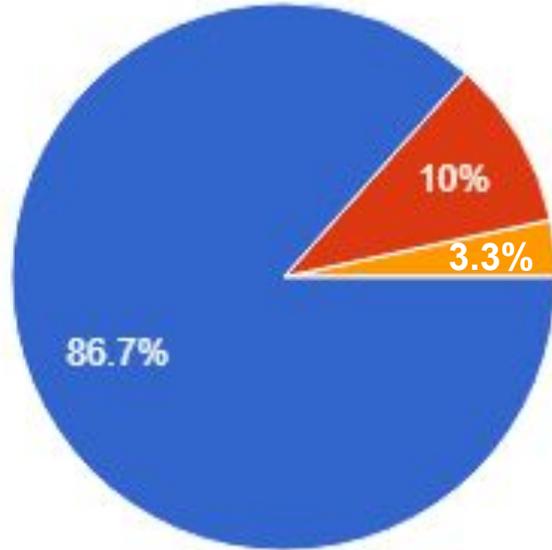
- 30 Female Japanese University Students (Age 18-30)
- 30 Female American University Students (Age 18-30)

## Research Instrument:

- Google Forms ([Japanese](#), [English](#))

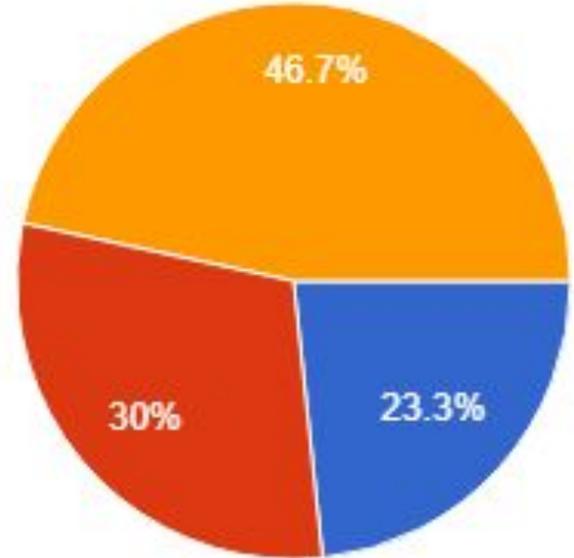
# Do you consider yourself a feminist?

## U.S.A.



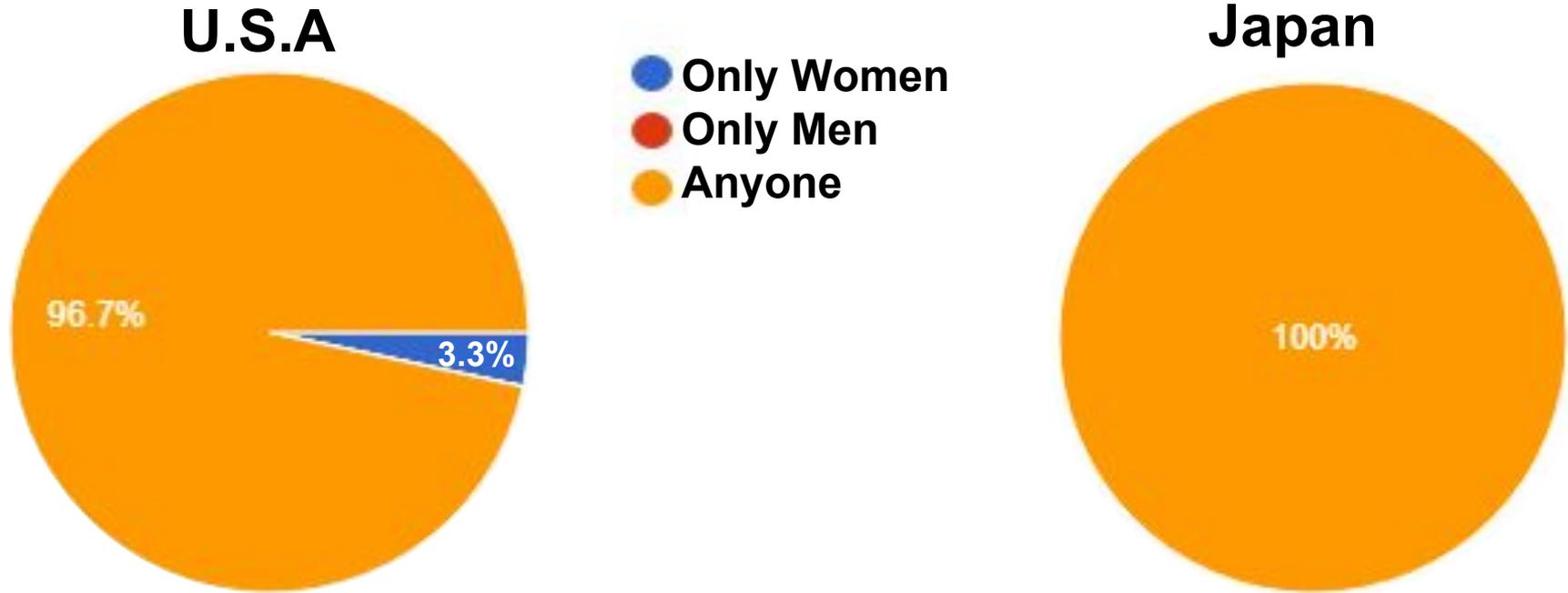
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

## Japan



Female college students in the U.S.A. are significantly more likely to identify as a Feminist.

# Who can be a feminist or promote feminism?



Japanese and American female college students **agree** that **anyone** can be a feminist or **promote** feminism.

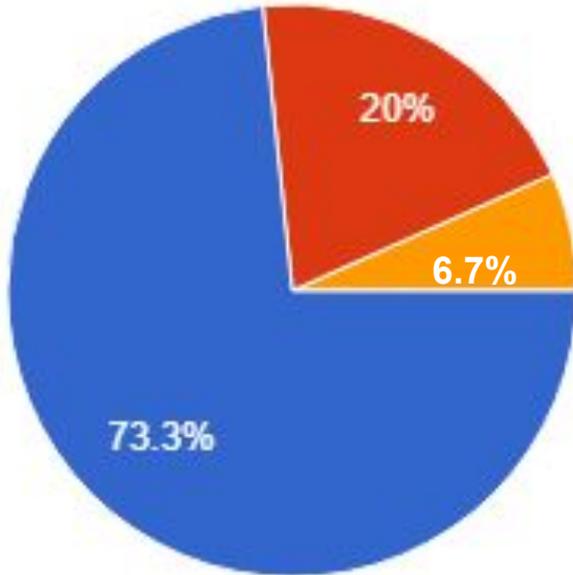


## **Research Question 1**

What do female university students  
perceive about feminism?

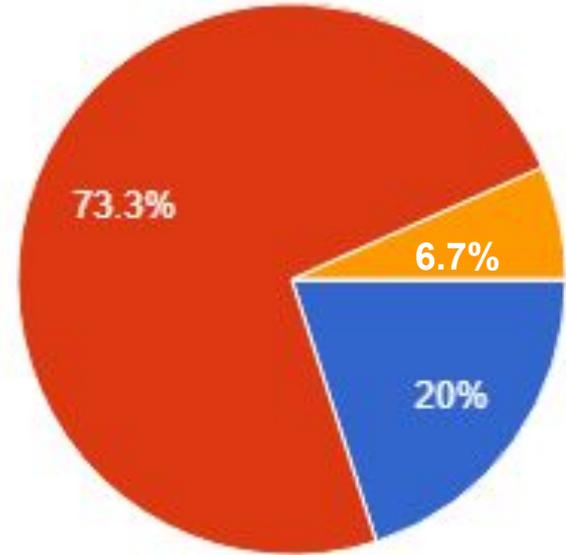
# Do you agree that feminism promotes positive self-esteem for women?

## U.S.A.



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

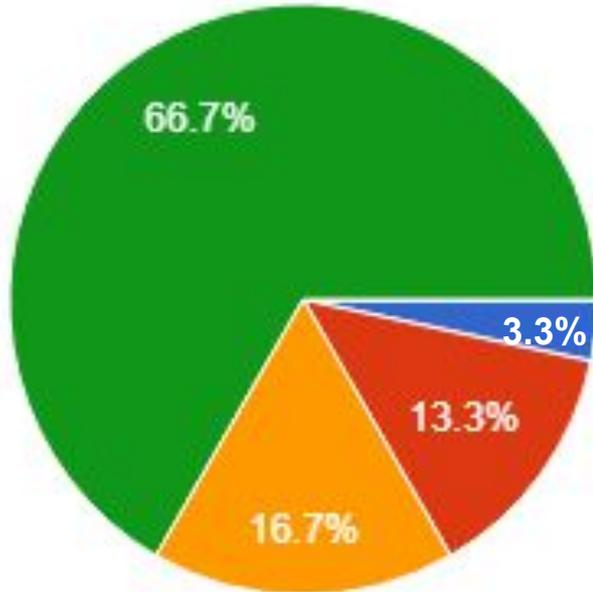
## Japan



The majority of female college students in **Japan** and the **U.S.A.** agree that Feminism promotes **positive self-esteem** for women.

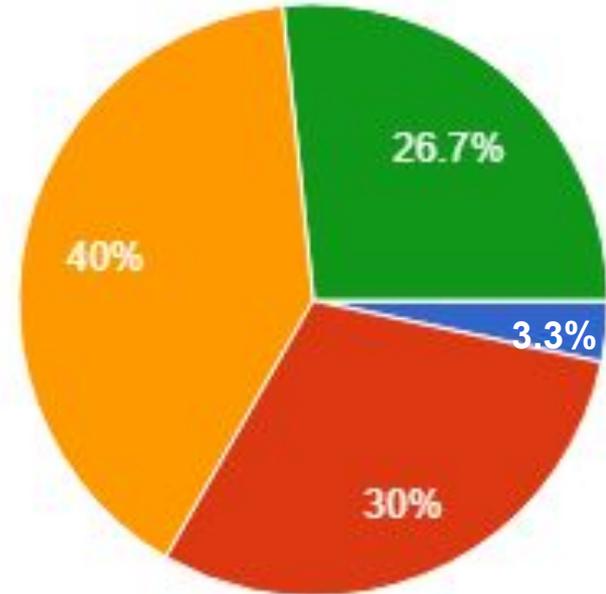
# How do you feel being a feminist is perceived?

## U.S.A.



- Very Positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very Negative

## Japan



In **Japan** being a feminist is perceived by almost half of the surveyed students as neutral in comparison to the **USA** where more than half of the students see it as negative.

# What characteristics do you think describe a feminist?



1. Strong
2. Independent
3. Equality
4. Rebellious
5. Outspoken



1. Gender equality
2. Women's rights
3. I don't know
4. Equality
5. Strong

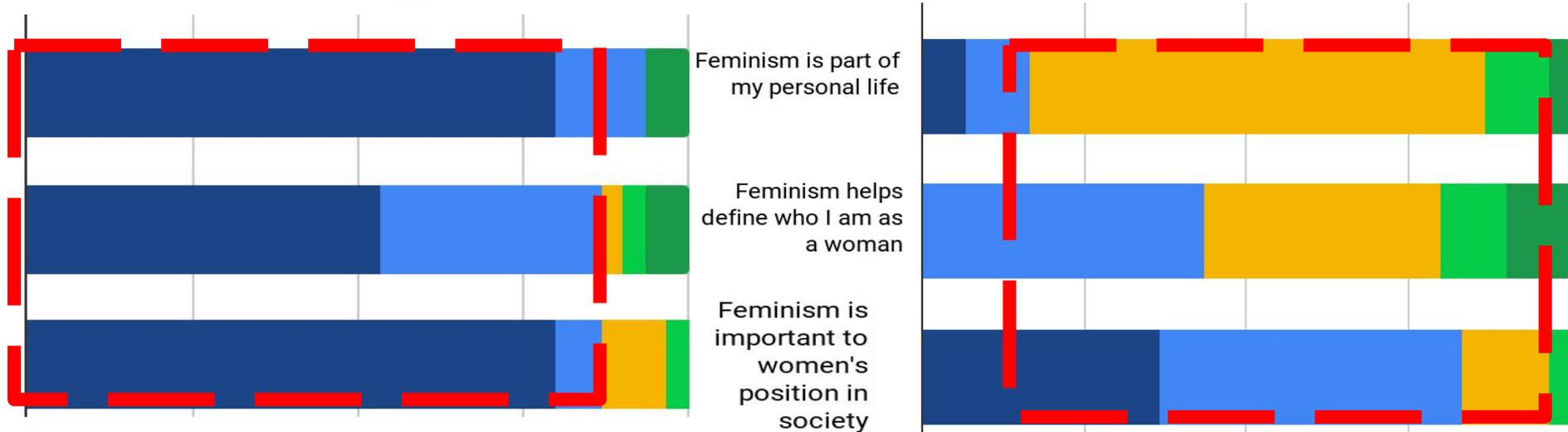
Japanese students believe that feminism is about **gender equality** and the **U.S.** is mostly concerned with the **empowerment** of the individual woman as strong or independent.

# For the following statements please check your extent of agreement

## U.S.A.



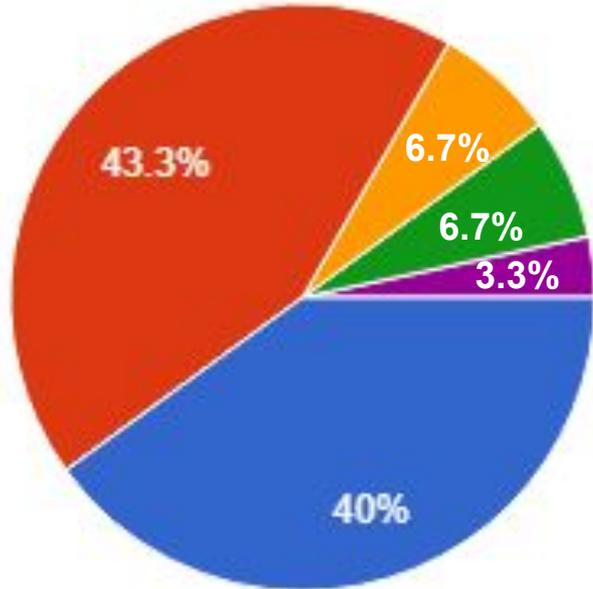
## Japan



Majority of **American** students agree that feminism is part of their **personal life** while majority of **Japanese** don't. **Both** agree that feminism helps define who they are and has importance to women's position in society.

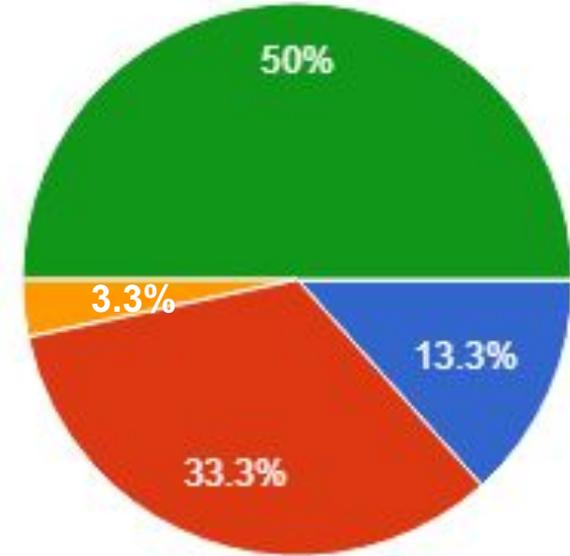
# How often do you think about major advancements for women's rights?

## U.S.A.



- Very Often
- Often
- Neutral
- Not Often
- Not at All

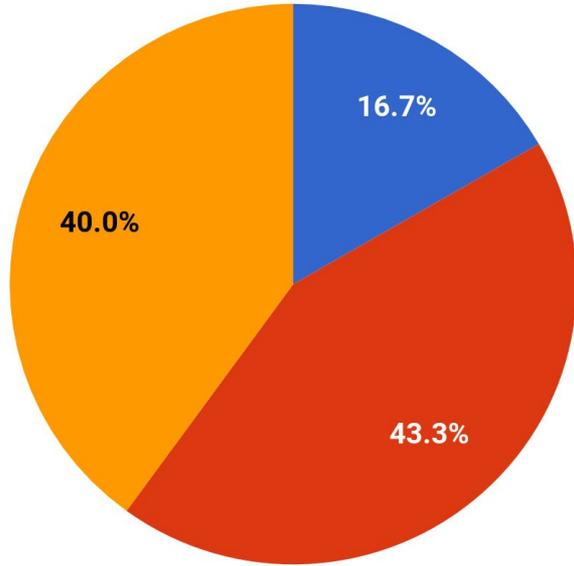
## Japan



Answers of **Japanese** female students are split while majority of **American** students think often about the major advancements.

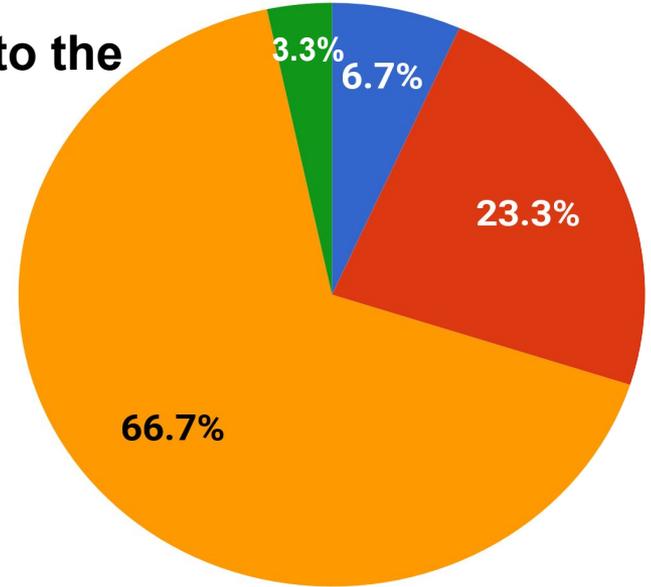
Which of the following do you think should be the first priority for a woman post graduation from university?

### U.S.A.



- Continuing Education
- Whatever is important to the individual
- Career
- Relationship/Marriage

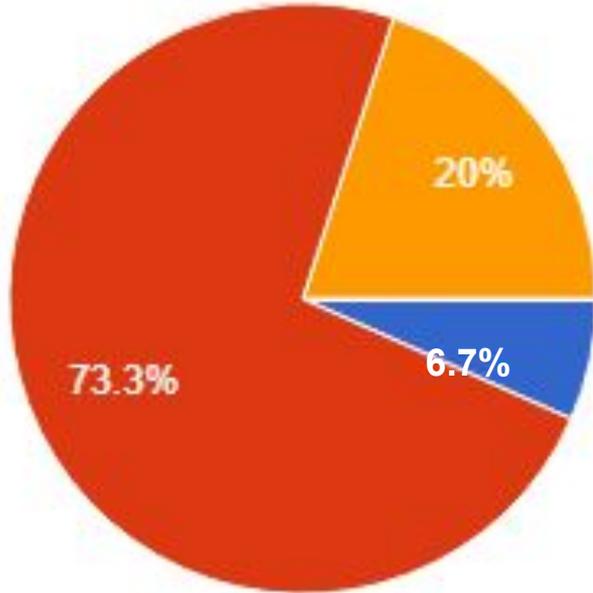
### Japan



66% of the **Japanese** students felt the first priority after graduation should be a career followed by 23% for their individual interest. **Americans** are split between career and individual interest.

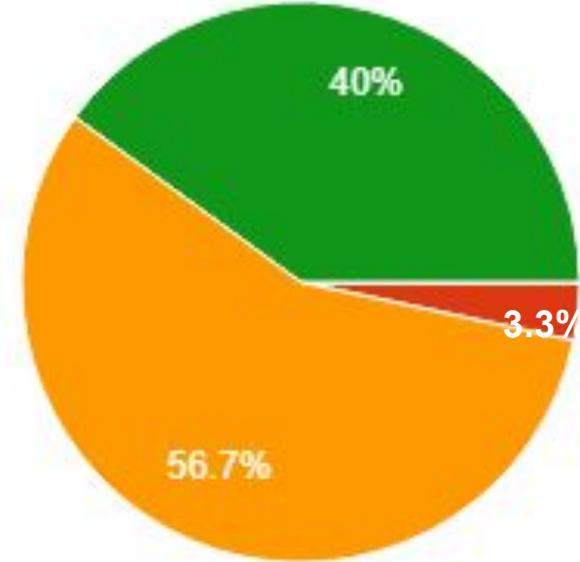
# How effective have feminist movements been in your country?

**U.S.A.**



- Very Effective
- Effective
- Neutral
- Ineffective
- Very Ineffective

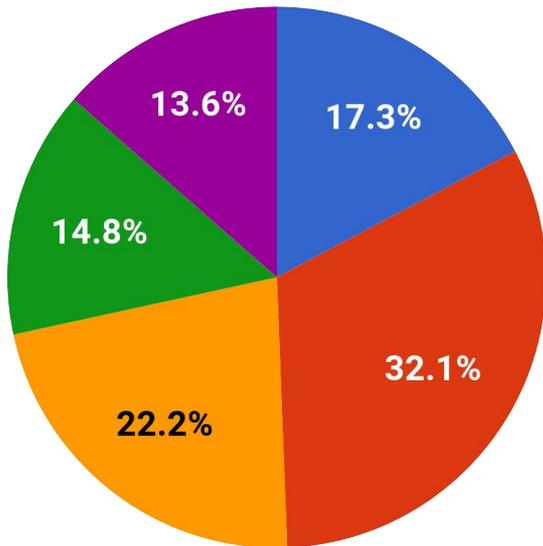
**Japan**



Most of **Japanese** students believe that feminist movements have been either **ineffective** or **neutral** compared to 73% of **American** female students feel they have been **effective**.

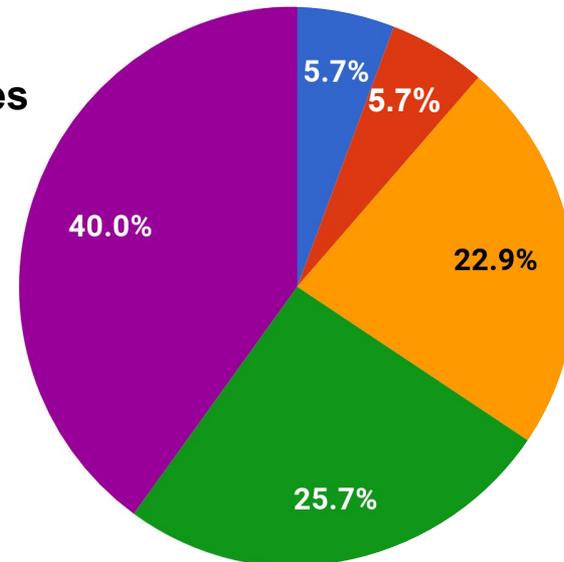
# How do you prefer to participate in Feminism?

## U.S.A.



- Actively participating in political events or protests
- Supporting affiliated feminist causes/organizations
- Grassroots activism/ local causes
- Being a woman feminist
- Other

## Japan



Half of **American** students were more likely to **actively participate** in various local organizations, whereas a majority of **Japanese** students preferred **other** avenues of support

# Summary of Research Findings 1

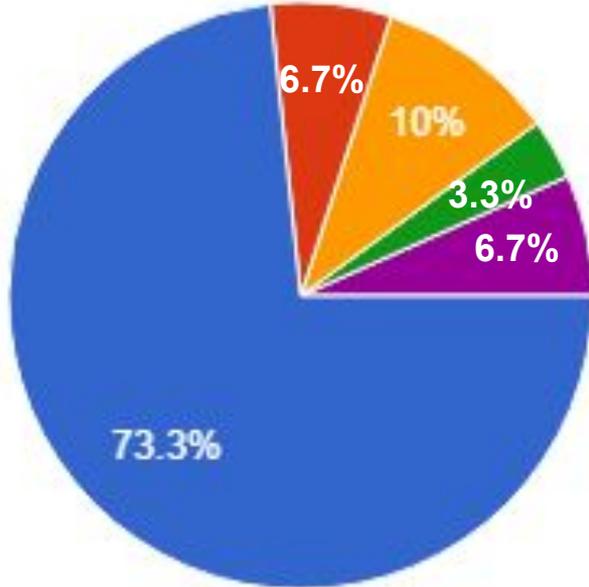
- Female college students in the U.S.A. are **significantly** more likely to **identify as a Feminist**.
- Japanese college students feel being a feminist is perceived as neutral while American college students were more likely to perceive being feminist as a negative trait.
- Japanese students feel that feminist movements in their country have had little to **no effect** compared to the U.S.A., where a majority of students feel that feminist movements have been **effective**.

## **Research Question 2**

What are the ongoing equity issues for women in their society that need to be addressed?

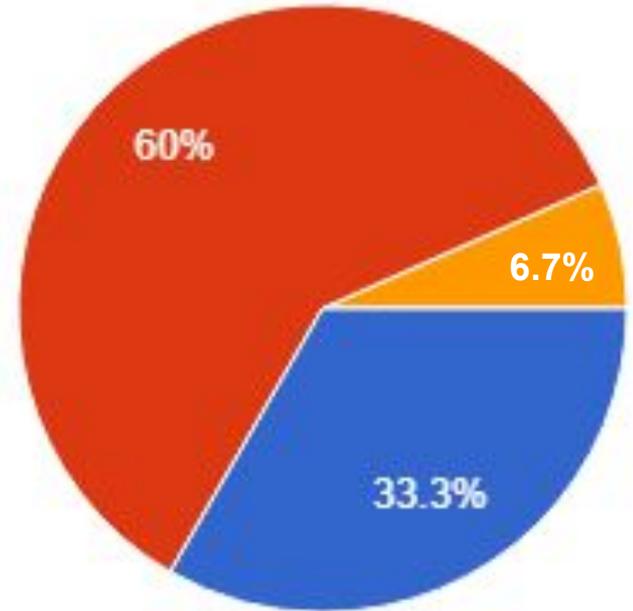
# Do you think there is a difference in equality between Men and Women?

## U.S.A.



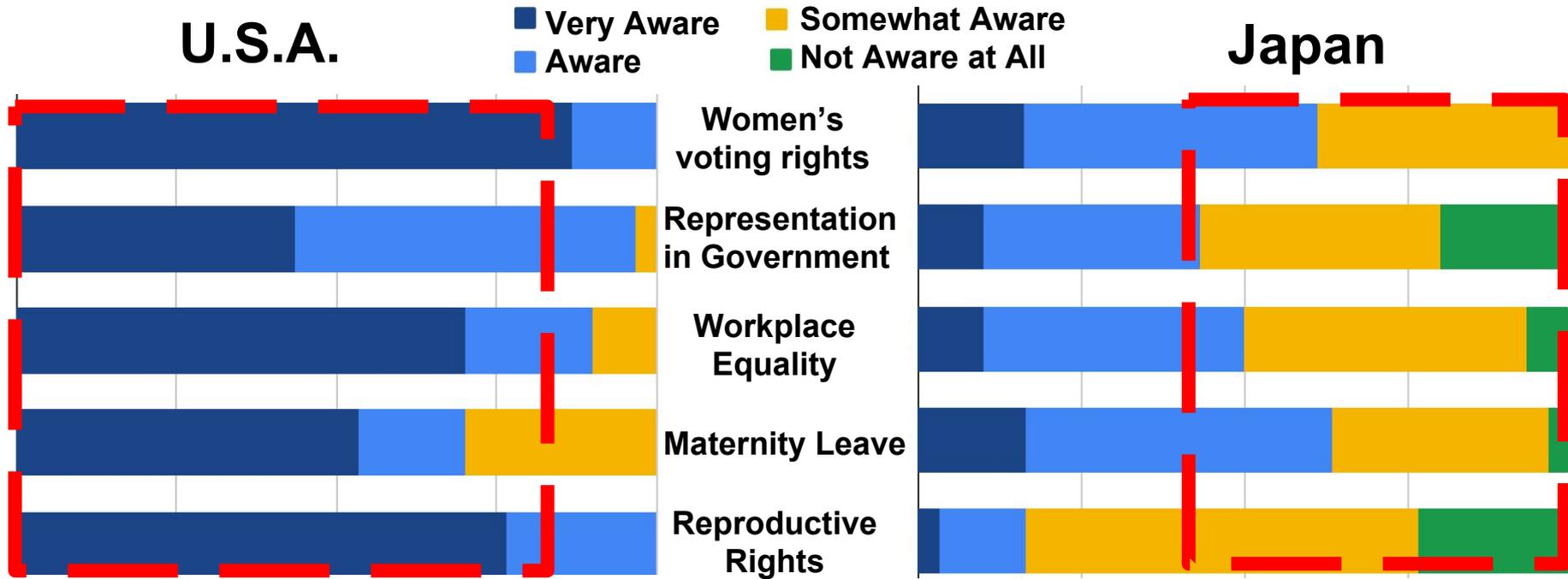
- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

## Japan



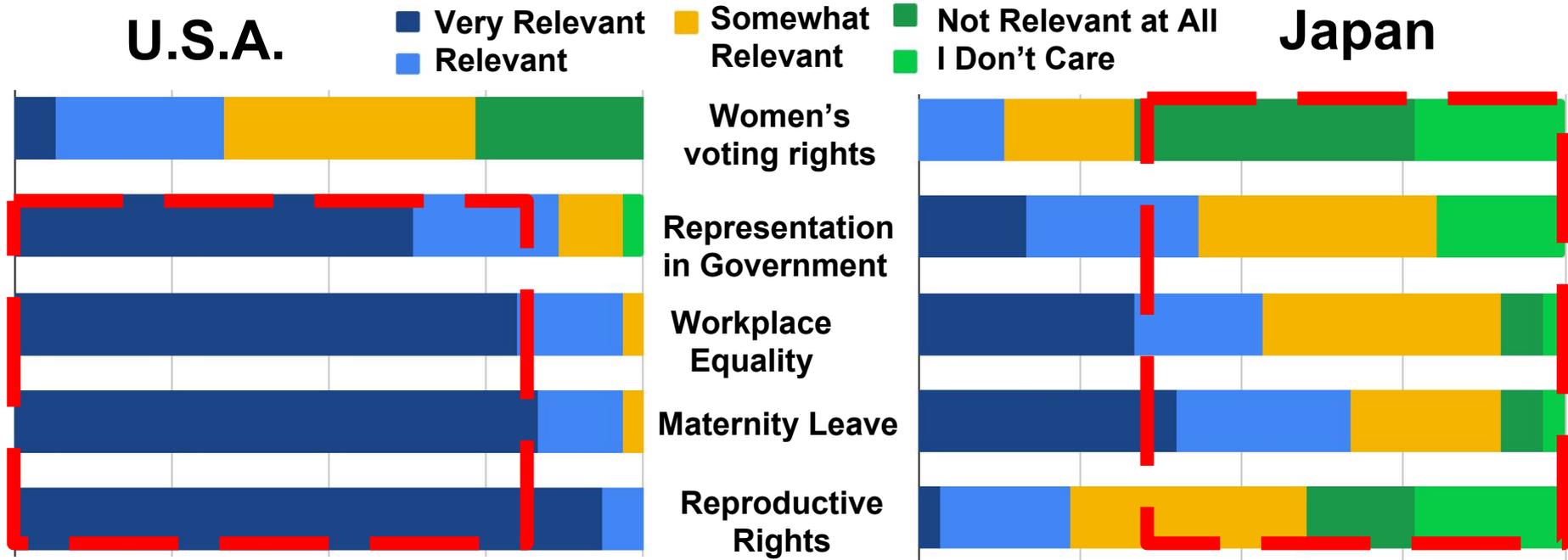
The majority of both groups agree that there is a **difference** in **equality** between Men and women.

# Were you aware of the following major advancements in feminist history



Female students in the **U.S.A** are very aware about previous advancements in feminist history while **Japanese** students were only somewhat aware

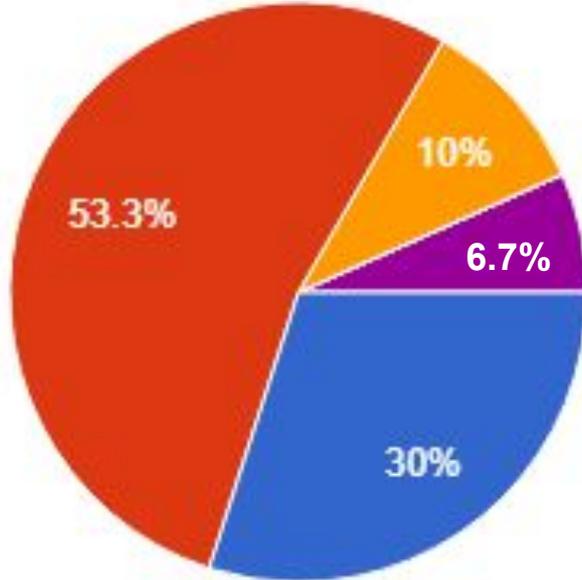
# Which of these issues remain relevant to women in your country in 2018



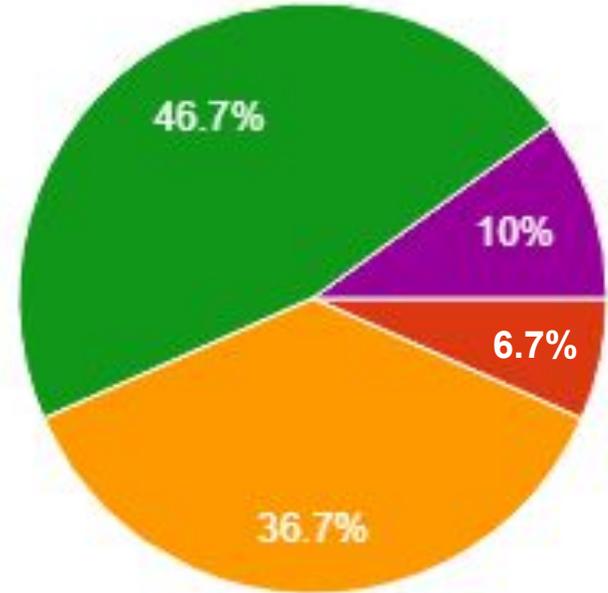
**Japanese** students have a more mixed response to the relevance of feminist issues while **American** students feel many of the topics are still relevant with the exception of voting rights.

# On average how often do you discuss feminist issues?

## U.S.A.



## Japan



**Japanese** students discuss feminist issues only a few times a year, while **American** students discuss much more often

# What other feminist or equality issues are you interested in?

## U.S.A.

- Intersectionality/Inclusivity
- LGBTQ rights and TRANSGENDER rights
- Sexual Assault/ violence
- “Ensuring that our expectations for boys matches our expectations for girls.”

## Japan

- “It is difficult to answer.”
- “I think that we must focus on the discriminatory thinking against men in society”
- “I think that it is inevitable for men and women to be uneven, so I do not have to force them to be equal.”
- “Equality for both genders does not make it truly equal.”

# Summary of Research Findings 2

- There is **agreement** between Japanese and American Students that there is **inequality** between men and women.
- **Japanese** students were **less aware** of previous advancements in equality and believed them to be less relevant to present day while **Americans** are very **informed** and believed these topics remain very relevant.
- **Japanese** students speak **less often** about feminist topics than Americans
- **American** students are **concerned** about specific topics such as **LGBTQ+ rights** while **Japanese** students only support overall gender equality **between men and women** as well as inclusivity of men.

# Conclusion & Discussion

- **Japanese** students are mainly focused on equality between men and women, which may have been a contributing factor for why they feel that feminist movements have been **less effective** in **Japan** than in America.
- **Feminist issues** have evolved into including Gender Issues in the **America** and have more involvement with **LGBTQ+ issues**, but **Japan** feels that it is still only between **men and women**.
- We grew up in **California** where **gender equality** is **prevalent** and we were surprised that Japanese women didn't have the same experience. To solve this, we feel that **education as children** can help further the awareness of gender equality in Japan.

# Limitation of the Study & Future Studies

- Results can not be generalized because of a small number of respondents
- Limited or Biased group
  - Americans mostly from California
  - Only female university students
- Be more inclusive of all gender identifications
- Explore a wider variety of equity issues such as:
  - Sexual assault and violence solutions
  - Racism/Intersectionality
  - People of color's voices
  - Sexuality (LGBTQ+)

# Acknowledgments

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Our Families

Capstone Classmates

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