

# Attitudes and Perceptions of Students from Asia:

Japan was the top place of origin of international students in the U.S. from 1994/95 through 1997/98. However, in recent years, the number of students from Japan studying in the U.S. has declined from a high of 46,872 students in 1999/00 to 21,290 in 2010/11, and Japan is now the seventh leading place of origin of international students in the U.S.

In fall and winter 2011, IIE collaborated with EducationUSA and the Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC) to survey prospective Japanese study abroad students on their attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. and other potential host destinations. Students were also asked about the obstacles facing study abroad, their preferred destinations, intended fields of study, reasons for studying abroad and primary sources of information on study in the U.S.

Of the 776 valid responses received, 55 percent were from male respondents and 45 percent were from female respondents. Over half (56 percent) had already decided to study abroad at the time of the survey, while 42 percent were just beginning to consider studying overseas and two percent had already studied abroad.

Most respondents indicated making professional contacts as their main reason for studying abroad (54 percent), followed by the cultural experience (51 percent) and preparing for a future career abroad or in a foreign-based company (43 percent). Respondents were also interested in conducting specific research projects or studies not available at home (14 percent) and improving their English language skills (four percent). Respondents could indicate more than one reason.

Respondents were interested in pursuing a variety of different types of study abroad, including graduate degrees (37 percent), undergraduate degrees (29 percent), short-term (non-degree) study (20 percent), professional degrees, such as an MBA, JD or MD (18 percent) and two-year degrees or certificates (12 percent). Respondents could select more than one choice.

The social sciences (including American studies and international relations) was the most popular intended field of study (chosen by 28 percent of respondents), followed by business and management (26 percent), language study (24 percent), humanities (16 percent), education (13 percent), fine or applied arts (12 percent), physical or life sciences (12 percent),

Destination	First Choice	Alternate Choice
United States	80.5%	12.7%
United Kingdom	6.1%	29.5%
Canada	4.8%	20.9%
Australia	2.9%	13.0%
Germany	0.8%	3.2%
France	0.8%	3.0%
Singapore	0.8%	2.1%
Finland	0.7%	0.6%
All Others	2.6%	12.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>n/a</b>

**Figure 15A: Preferred Study Abroad Destinations for Prospective Students from Japan**

engineering (ten percent) and math or computer science (seven percent).

The United States was the most popular first-choice destination listed in an open response question, with 81 percent of respondents citing the U.S. as their first-choice destination (Fig. 15A). The United Kingdom was the second most popular first-choice destination, with six percent of the total, followed by Canada with five percent and Australia with three percent.

Among possible alternate destinations, if their first choice was not available, 30 percent of respondents listed the U.K., 21 percent listed Canada and 13 percent each listed Australia and the U.S.

# Japan

Dimension	Percent of Respondents				
	USA	UK	Canada	Australia	Singapore
Wide range of schools and programs	77.8	46.1	22.3	11.3	11.2
High quality higher education system	68.9	19.5	11.6	10.4	2.8
Welcomes international students	60.2	14.7	26.8	31.7	16.0
Expensive tuition	60.1	11.7	16.9	18.8	5.4
Good student support services	50.9	44.1	12.6	8.4	3.7
Many scholarship opportunities	50.6	5.7	6.8	6.4	2.3
High cost of living	38.8	19.5	5.8	4.3	2.8
Good lifestyle for students	35.4	14.9	45.2	34.8	20.6
Costly school application process	30.4	50.0	11.7	8.1	7.9
Language barrier	30.1	36.5	20.9	14.8	11.2
Difficult to get a student visa	25.6	17.0	3.6	3.0	3.9
Safe place to study	8.8	30.5	23.2	24.7	28.9

Figure 15B: Impressions of Key Host Destinations of Prospective Students from Japan

Compared to four other popular host destinations for Japanese students, the U.S. was perceived as a study destination with a wide range of schools and programs, a high quality higher education system and that welcomes international students by a much higher proportion of students than for the other countries (Fig. 15B). However, the majority of respondents (60 percent) also felt that tuition at U.S. colleges and universities was expensive, although most (51 percent) recognized that a large number of scholarships are available. Canada was seen as the destination with the best lifestyle for students, and the United Kingdom was seen as the safest

place to study. Only a small proportion of prospective Japanese students (nine percent) felt the U.S. was a safe place to study and about one quarter (26 percent) felt that it would be difficult to obtain a visa to study in the U.S.

By far the greatest obstacle to studying abroad was cost, cited by almost three-quarters of survey respondents (73 percent), regardless of destination. Other obstacles include gaining acceptance to the institution of their choice (39 percent), studying in a foreign language (also 39 percent), and finding accurate information (38 percent).

Respondents from Japan tended to be more strongly influenced by others with regard to their educational decisions than their peers outside Asia. While 37 percent of respondents cited themselves as the most important influence on their educational decisions, 18 percent cited teacher or professors, 17 percent cited friends or classmates and 13 percent cited parents.

Over half (54 percent) of respondents cited the Fulbright/EducationUSA advising office, fairs, events and website as one of their top sources of information on study in the U.S. Other sources include teachers or professors (cited by 29 percent), friends or classmates (26 percent), and the Internet or news media (25 percent).

The Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC) was established in 1979 in order to promote mutual understanding between Japan and the United States through the Fulbright Program. JUSEC's activities include the Fulbright Exchange and Grant Program, educational advising, Fulbright Alumni activities and special educational exchange projects. For more information, please see [www.fulbright.jp](http://www.fulbright.jp).