

# Am I really like this?

## Stereotypes transmitted by the media about Japan and France

*Clichés vs. reality?*

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**Surprising information!**

Japanese people have small eyes because they eat rice and all French people live in Paris...

Umm...

**The list of stereotypes is long.**

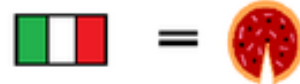
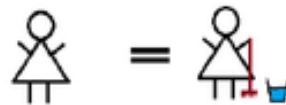
**But, first, what is a stereotype?**

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According to the CNRTL (Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales), a stereotype is an idea, an opinion that is made up, accepted without any thinking and that is repeated without being critically examined, by a person or a group, and that determines how they think, feel and act to some extent (1).



Or even...



To summarize, it is a fixed caricatural representation, about individuals or different cultures.

## **A little bit of history...**

It is said that stereotypes are as old as languages, but why and how were they created in the first place?

In an article written by Jean-Baptiste Veyrieras during an interview with Anne Lehmann and Vincent Liqueste, it is highlighted that learning is done by stereotypes. They help people create stepping stones to understand the world.

With the help of some images, notions or information, the imagination fabricates and creates a representation on the long term that fills a void, a lack of knowledge on other areas.

This representation is then considered true, shared and then finally accepted.

*Examples:*

*"Chinese people eat dogs", "The French are lazy", "The Swiss are slow".*

The list is long, very long...

This article was written to have fun but also to reflect on stereotypes, read, heard or seen about Japan and France.

To spread, stereotypes have used different mediums based on different areas: drawings, oral transmission, posters, newspaper articles, books, the radio, the television and lastly the internet.



With the internet, true, false or "arranged" information have spread more rapidly and more widely.

Sometimes, stereotypes can make you laugh, but not all the time.



Are Japanese like that ?

### JAPAN SEEN FROM FRANCE

#### **JAPANESE ALWAYS EAT RICE AND SUSHI**

**False-** Japanese have a very varied diet and eat, of course, products from other countries and not only rice and sushi. From time to time, Japanese also eat strange things like whales and caramelized insects...

But not often...

And, do French people eat frog legs and escargots every day, or any other local specialities?

#### **THE MOST POPULAR SPORT IN JAPAN IS SUMO**

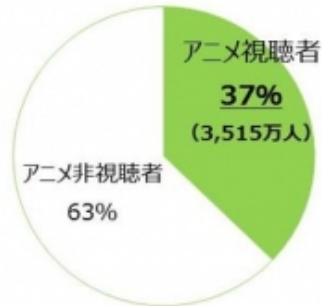
**True & False-** Sumo is a sport which has been existing for 1500 years. The first time sumo was mentioned was in the *Kojiki* (tales of ancient times), a book of 712, which is the oldest copy existing of Japanese writing (3).

It was even considered as a religious ceremony. Even if it has become a national sport, the most popular sport today is baseball.

In a survey done by [Piece-of-japan.com](http://Piece-of-japan.com) in 2016, the question asked was : "what is your favorite sport?" 42,8% of Japanese responded that it was baseball whereas 21,8% answered sumo, just behind the 26,2% who responded football (4).

## EVERY JAPANESE LIKE ANIMES AND MANGAS

**True & False-** Animes are indeed very popular in Japan: 37% of the population or approximately 35 million of Japanese people (35 515 000) have watched anime in 2019.



Here is the diagram which explains that 37% of Japanese watch Animes (5).  
PR TIMES プレスリリース



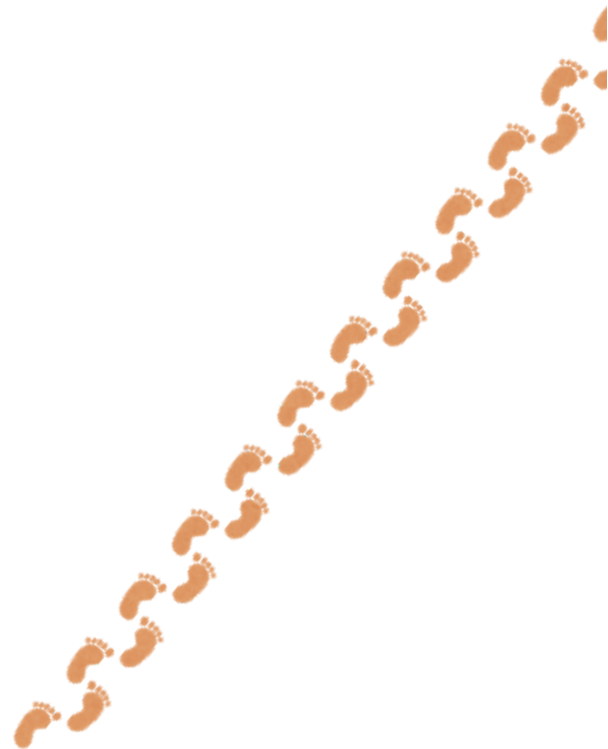
In fact, what is Anime ?

An anime (アニメ) also known as Japanimation is a Japanese animation movie or series. These anime are often inspired by manga or books.

And what is a manga ?

A manga is a comic strip. First manga in Japan dates from the VIII<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of paper rolls on which drawings were painted so as the writing. Thereby, they are called Emakimonos (6).

Therefore, despite the majority of Japanese watching animes, it does not mean that the whole population watches animes. One of the reasons why Japanese people watch animes is because the Japanese television makes and frequently broadcasts animation movies. (Pokémon, Naruto, One Piece, etc.) Nevertheless, different strokes for different folks. Furthermore, there are no Ninjas running in the streets and the sky is neither pink nor green !!! Maybe sometimes ?? But, you can always find Godzilla in Tokyo next to the Toho Cinemas !



### **EVERY JAPANESE PERSON IS AN OTAKU AND THEY ALL LOVE TO COSPLAY**

**False-** First of all, what is an otaku? An otaku is a person who spends a lot of time watching anime, reading manga, and playing video games, mostly indoor activities.

Synonym: A Geek



Japan is very famous for being the country of anime and manga, but that doesn't mean that 100% of the population like it and are otakus!

It is not often that you bump into "Cosplayers" in Japan, dressed up as manga, anime, or video game characters. Nevertheless, you can meet cosplayers in Tokyo, especially Akihabara, in the streets or, during events or gatherings. But Tokyo is the capital, and it doesn't represent Japan as a whole.



### **JAPAN IS LIKE CHINA! AND JAPANESE PEOPLE ARE IN FACT CHINESE... BY THE WAY THEY WEAR MASKS BECAUSE OF THE POLLUTION**

**False-** No, seriously?... Historically speaking, there have been exchanges, burrows, and influences.

But they are different countries with different cultures! AS for the masks, Japanese people wear them as a way to show respect to other people but they also wear them to protect themselves from illnesses...

### **THE JAPANESE WORK 24/24 HOURS**

**True & False-** In Japan, being part of society is extremely important, especially in professional practices.

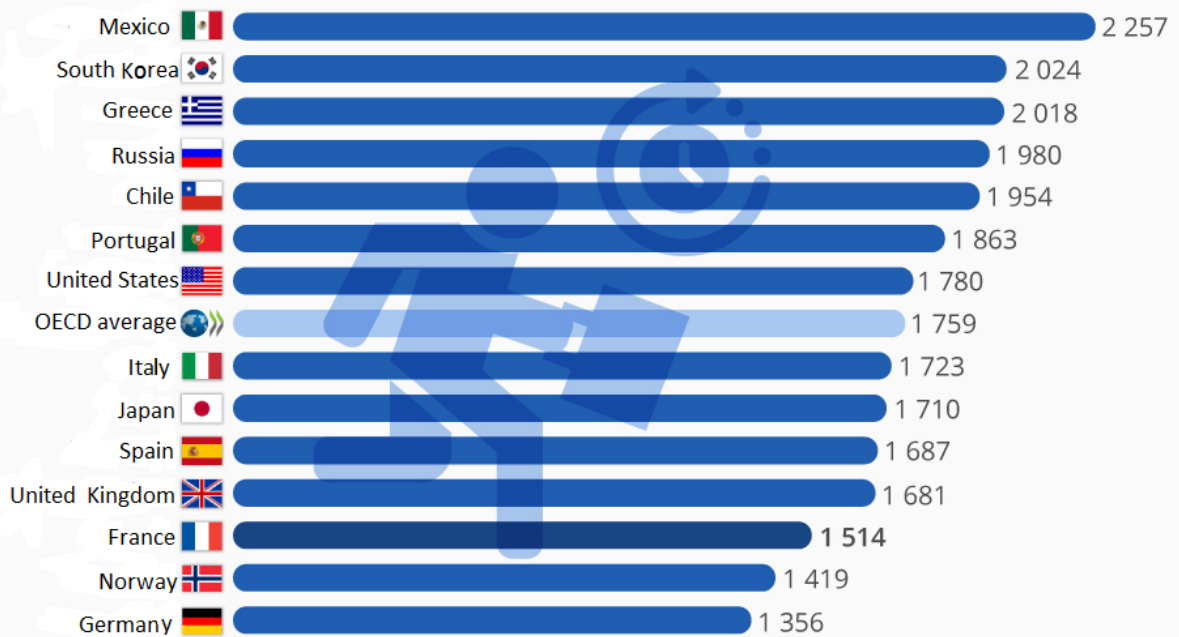
The maximum hours of work per day are 8 hours for a total of 40 hours per week, but a percentage of the population prefer to work longer. To keep their jobs?

However, it is not the country where we work the longest.

In the graph shown below, it appears that, by comparing the average hours of work per employee in different countries in 2017, Japan is not in first place on the ranking(7).

## The country where we work the most

Average number of hours worked by an employee in some countries in 2017



Source : OCDE

statista

## [Infography: country where you work the most](#)

Every Japanese woman likes to say **KAWAIIIIIIII!!!**

**True & False-** The origin of the term kawaii is "kaoha yushi" which meant shame. The meaning changed until now meaning "cute" (8).

Kawaii is omnipresent in Japanese culture, it is certainly often heard, either on television or in the news or while visiting Japan. But this word is principally used by Japanese students in everyday life.

In Japan, the character that is the most "kawaii" is Hello Kitty.



## **PEOPLE WITH TATTOOS ARE YAKUZAS**

**True & False-** In the past, tattoos were considered as art. Banned in the Meiji period, it became the symbol of the Japanese mafia (The Yakuza).

Today, with westernisation, tattoos have become more and more tolerated, but people are still surprised, curious, and suspicious about it..

## **AND SO HOW ABOUT FRANCE?**

### **FRANCE SEEN FROM JAPAN**

Usually the image of France is very positive in Japan but it seems like most Japanese people only know France through the news.

In a survey done by Léna Giunta in 2017(9) answered by 203 students in three Japanese universities in Tokyo and its suburbs, it appeared that 30 people (14,8%) were not able to correctly locate France on a map. In general the students knew that France was located in Europe but they would sometimes mistake it for Germany or Italy...



### **BUILDINGS ARE PRETTY**

**True & False-** In cities, the French architecture are usually meticulous and very beautiful. Yet, not far from the centre, there are residential blocks as well, commercial zones, industrial zones crossed by peripheral zones or highways and that is already very much displeasing to watch...

### **FRANCE IS THE COUNTRY OF CUISINE, WINE, BREAD, CHEESE AND ESCARGOTS (10)**

**True & False-** It is possible to eat very well in France, but the French do not always eat refined cuisine. And then France has a lot of other specialties depending on the region, steak and fries, mussels and fries, pizza ...

## **FRANCE IS PARIS**

Umm..... And the other cities ?

Yes indeed, Paris is certainly located in France, but there is also Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Nice and many other cities as well... Japanese people usually only know Paris and the Eiffel Tour because the Japanese media shows Paris most of the time, and presents it as the city the most romantic in the world and beautiful.



## **FRANCE IS FASHION? AND EVERY FRENCH ARE WEARING BERETS**

Not really..

Perhaps some French like to wear, but everything depends on their daily activities, and those people don't necessarily wear luxuriously...

For the beret, erstwhile worn by herdsman, has become an cool accessory. But not everyone wear it. It has even become the subject of debate(9)!

For or against Beret?



"For or against Beret" © Béret Gucci / illustration Luna Joulia

In conclusion, stereotypes can often be fun, or be frustrating...



But in reality they do exist and they are not easy to get rid of, no matter which culture you belong to. To add to that, today, stereotypes spread very rapidly thanks to the evolution of social media where we can find all sorts of information.

Meanwhile , if the medias help the spread ,they can also bring the persons to take a step back, to inquire,to sink about what they hear and what they read, in short, to not let influenced by images already made, cliches even if it is not always simple to not follow an opinion sometimes spread or very common.

### **Sources:**

- (1) CNRTL <https://www.cnrtl.fr>
- (2) <https://lejournal.cnrs.fr/articles/pourquoi-les-stereotypes-ont-la-peau-dure>
- (3) <https://www.dosukoi.fr/histoire-du-sumo>
- (4) <https://piece-of-japan.com/news/rankings-2016/favorite-sports-ranking.html>
- (5) <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000006853.000007006.html>
- (6) <https://fr.statista.com/infographie/12595/heures-travailees-par-salarie-ocde/>
- (7) <https://infosanime.wordpress.com/2016/12/18/quest-ce-quin-anime-un-manga/>
- (8) <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kawaii>
- (9) Stéréotypes et représentations de la France chez les étudiants japonais à Tokyo en 2017, entre continuité et nouveauté : influence de la durée d'étude du français et du séjour en France, Léna GIUNTA

(10) <https://mycrazyjapan.fr/cliches-japonais-francais/>

(11) <https://www.elle.fr/Mode/Accessoires-de-Mode/beret-29828>  
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**Illustrations:**

(12) <https://www.irasutoya.com/>

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