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## How many people practice confucianism

The Office of International Religious Freedom 2008, International Religious Freedom, 2008, The U.S. State Department, United States, viewed 16th September, 2009, < .The Association of Religion Data Archives 2006, National Profiles, Department of Sociology, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, viewed 16th September, 2009, < .Central Intelligence Agency 2009, The World Factbook 2009, ISSN 1553-8133, Washington, DC, viewed 16th September, 2009, < .ChartsBin statistics collector team 2009, Confucianism Adherents by Country, ChartsBin.com, viewed 17th May, 2025, < . Chinese symbol for water Confucianism is a Chinese ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. This complex system of thought includes moral, social, political, philosophical, and quasi-religious thought. It has had a considerable influence on the culture and history of East Asia. While it originated in China, it has spread to Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam. Most people who adhere to the teachings of Confucius follow traditional Chinese religion, which blends Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and traditional local practices and beliefs.The symbol to the left stands for "water". Though Confucianism is recognized as one of the eleven main living religions, it has no standard symbol or icon representing its belief system. Quite often, though, this Chinese ideogram for water is utilized. It represents the 'source of life' in Chinese philosophy. It is very difficult to get an accurate figure of how many people practice Confucianism. In fact, there are statistics showing that less than 10 million people follow Confucianism, while others show that there are nearly 350 million. The reason for this extreme disparity is due to the way in which these figures are reported. Some figures include people who only believe in Confucianism, while others include people who believe in Traditional Chinese folk religion. However, it is clear that the vast majority of individuals who follow Confucianism reside in East Asia. Below is a map of East Asia, where Confucianism originated and continues to be practiced. East Asia K'ung Fu Tzu, but commonly referred to in English as "Confucius", was born in 551 B.C.E. in the state of Lu - what is now the modern day Shantung Province in China. When he was 22 years old, he opened a school. Successful teaching led to his appointment as minister of justice of Lu. He eventually left and traveled throughout China for 13 years, giving advice to rulers of various provinces. During this time he accumulated a small number of students. He eventually returned to Lu, where he devoted himself to teaching. He died in 470 B.C.E. at the age of 72. His lifetime almost coincided exactly with the life of Buddha, who did two years earlier at the age of eighty. It is important to remember that during his lifetime Confucius was anything but famous. In fact, Confucianism as an institution was not established until long after his death. During the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C.E. a diverse collection of his writings circulated concerning his life and teachings. However, these writings had little cohesion. Finally, during the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.E., a cohesive system of Confucian beliefs were formed. Confucian beliefs center around humanity. Of the important values emphasized in Confucian thought, these are stressed most:Li: includes ritual, propriety, etiquette, etc. Hsiao: love within the family: love of parents for their children and of children for their parents Yi: righteousness Xin: honesty and trustworthiness Jen: benevolence, humaneness towards others; the highest Confucian virtue Chung: loyalty to the state The following are five broad topics that are often covered by religions. Taken and adapted from patheos.com, these are how Confucian thought attempts to deal with these issues: The idea of learning from the past is fundamental to Confucian thinking, and the early histories and biographies are the closest thing to sacred narratives in Confucianism. Among the "classics" are many stories that contain a moral component or exemplify an effort to understand why things happened as they did. Specifically, Confucius is credited with either compiling or editing what are known as the "Five Classics". They include:Classic of ChangesClassic of PoetryClassic of RitesClassic of HistorySpring and Autumn AnnalsAlso, the "Four Books" are a group of Chinese classic texts that were selected in the Song Dynasty (96-1279 C.E.) as an introduction to Confucian thought. They include:The Great LearningThe Gre Confucius did not deny the existence of a reality beyond the human world, but he said that the nature of ultimate reality and the intentions and expectations of divinities are beyond human capacity to know or understand. Human morals should therefore be based on human relationships, without reference to some higher order. Confucian scholars have long debated essential human nature without reaching agreement as to its fundamental characteristics. Most agree, however, that the purpose of existence is to reach one's highest potential as a human being. Through a rigorous process of self-cultivation that lasts a lifetime, one may eventually become a "perfected person." According to some interpretations of Confucianism, suffering and evil are inevitable in human life, and can promote learning and growth. A mistake is not a "sin," but an opportunity to learn and do better next time. Empathy for the suffering of others also provides motivation to grow morally, but not all humans are capable of empathy. Confucius stated that the afterlife was beyond human comprehension. Humans should live and behave in such a way as to promote ideal social relations, rather than to act based on the expectations of rewards or punishments after death. The owners/operators of this website take no position on religious issues or controversies, and urges understanding, tolerance and mutual respect between peoples of all faiths and of no faith. Copyright © 2007-2025, Answers 2000 Limited CERTAIN CONTENT THAT APPEARS ON THIS SITE COMES FROM AMAZON SERVICES LLC. THIS CONTENT IS PROVIDED 'AS IS' AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE OR REMOVAL AT ANY TIME. CERTAIN CONTENT THAT APPEARS ON THIS SITE, COMES FROM AMAZON EU S.❖ F.I. THIS CONTENT IS PROVIDED 'AS IS' AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE OR REMOVAL AT ANY TIME. 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Ceremonial undertakers perform celebratory rituals for Confucius' birthday at the ancient Confucius Temple in Nanjing, China. (Feature China/Future Publishing via Getty Images) On Sept. 28, millions of people across East Asia and around the world will celebrate the birthday of Confucius – the ancient Chinese philosopher and founder of Confucianism. They will pay respects to Confucius during ceremonies held at temples, with participants dressed in traditional costumes, performing dances and making offerings of food and drink. These rituals are part of a 2,000-year-old tradition known as the Grand Ceremony of the Worship of Confucius. Ahead of the celebrations, here are some key facts about Confucianism and the role Confucian beliefs and values play in shaping public life for East Asians. This analysis is based primarily on surveys conducted by Pew Research Center in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan in 2023. Additional information comes from academic surveys conducted in many of these places and in China between 2016 and 2018. This Pew Research Center analysis examines the influence of Confucianism in East Asia. It is based on the Center's June 2024 report, "Religion and Spirituality in East Asian Societies"; our October 2023 report, "Religion Among Asian Americans"; and our August 2023 report, "Measuring Religion in China." The East Asia report was based on a Center survey of 10,390 adults conducted in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam from June 2 to Sept. 17, 2023. Due to restrictions on foreign organizations, we did not conduct our own survey in China and instead relied on academic surveys, including the Chinese General Social Survey conducted in 2018. The analysis on filial piety in China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan in this post is new and comes from the sixth wave of the East Asian Social Survey. That wave was conducted as part of the General Social Survey (GSS) in these four places (i.e., the 2016 Korean GSS, the 2016 Taiwan Social Change Survey, the 2017 Chinese GSS, and the 2017 and 2018 Japanese GSSs). Confucianism emerged from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. He was born in the sixth century B.C.E. in what is today Shandong province on China's east coast. His disciples described his philosophy in the book "The Analects" (Lunyu), which was published years after his death and is among Confucianism's foundational texts. One of the main ways that Confucian values are expressed in East Asian societies today is through "filial piety." It is a core Confucian teaching that humans are indebted to their parents and should honor them even after their death. In China, Taiwan and South Korea, most adults uphold family values centered on respect and care for parents. For instance, in China, more than eight-in-ten adults agree that fathers should be respected under all circumstances (84%) and that children must make efforts to do something that would bring honor to their parents (88%), according to East Asian Social Survey data from 2016-18. Ancestor veneration – another expression of filial piety – is common across East Asia. These acts of worship are meant to fulfill one's duty toward deceased ancestors in Confucian teachings. Traditional ancestor veneration practices – from burning incense to making offerings of food, drink or "spirit money" – are considered necessary in the region to ensure the comfort and happiness of ancestors in the afterlife. In the four places the Center surveyed in 2023, the vast majority of adults say they have recently engaged in one or more of these activities to take care of their ancestors, including 86% in Taiwan and 85% in Japan. Gravesite maintenance or "tomb sweeping" is also part of the traditional practices of honoring ancestors in East Asia, particularly during certain holidays. In our East Asia surveys, most respondents who have gravesites that contain the ashes or remains of deceased family members visit these gravesites at least once a year. For instance, in Taiwan, 86% of those who have a family gravesite visit it once a year or more, and in Japan, the share is 83%. The 2018 Chinese General Social Survey found that three-quarters of Chinese adults also visited a family member's gravesite at least once in the year prior to the survey. Relatively few people in East Asia seem to consider Confucianism a religion – a term often understood to refer to organized, hierarchical forms of religion, such as Christianity. People in these places almost never identify as Confucian when asked about their religion. Praying or offering respects to Confucius is uncommon, and the rates of doing so are much lower than the rates of praying to Guanyin – a deity associated with compassion – and Buddha. For instance, in Taiwan, only 26% say they venerate Confucius, but much larger shares say they pray to Guanyin (69%) or Buddha (46%). Still, some scholars argue that Confucian beliefs and practices make it a religion. For instance, Confucian teachings involve belief in the existence of tian – an invisible divine power, usually translated as "heaven" – that controls the fate and destiny of humans. And some Confucian traditions, such as Confucius memorial ceremonies and ancestor veneration, resemble religious rituals. People in East Asia differ when it comes to having a personal connection to Confucianism – as do Asian Americans of East Asian origin. One way that the Center studies people's affinity for religious traditions or spiritual philosophies is by asking whether they feel a personal connection to the way of life that these traditions or philosophies represent. In the East Asian places we surveyed, attitudes differ widely on this measure. In South Korea, a clear majority of adults (59%) say they feel connected to the Confucian way of life. This is higher than the share who say the same about any other religious or philosophical tradition we asked about. But in Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong, only around a third or fewer adults say they feel connected to Confucianism. In all the places we surveyed aside from South Korea, people are more likely to say they feel a personal connection to Buddhism than to the Confucian way of life. Asian Americans of East Asian origin also differ in their connections to Confucianism. About one-in-five Americans who trace their roots to East Asia consider themselves close to Confucianism, according to our 2022-23 survey of Asian adults. There are some differences by origin group: For example, 24% of Chinese Americans and 22% of Korean Americans express a connection to Confucianism, compared with just 4% of Japanese Americans. The Motorsport Images Collections captures events from 1895 to today's most recent coverage.Discover The CollectionCurated, compelling, and worth your time. Explore our latest gallery of Editors' Picks.Browse Editors' FavoritesExperience AI-Powered CreativityThe Motorsport Images Collections captures events from 1895 to today's most recent coverage.Discover The CollectionCurated, compelling, and worth your time. Explore our latest gallery of Editors' Picks.Browse Editors' FavoritesExperience AI-Powered CreativityConfucianism has existed for more than 2,500 years and is one of the most influential religious philosophies in the history of China. It is concerned with inner virtue, morality and respect for the community and its values.Religion, Social Studies, Ancient CivilizationsImageConfucian Philosopher MenciusConfucianism is an ancient Chinese belief system, which focuses on the importance of personal ethics and morality.Photograph by Historica Graphica Collection/Heritage Images/Getty Images, taken from Myths and Legends of ChinaConfucianism is a philosophy and belief system from ancient China that laid the foundation for much of Chinese culture. Confucius was a philosopher and teacher who lived from 551 to 479 B.C.E. His thoughts on ethics, good behavior and moral character were written down by his disciples in several books, the most important being the Lunyu. Confucianism promotes ancestor worship and human-centered virtues for living a peaceful life. Some examples of ancestor worship include maintaining a shrine in one's home for relatives that have passed on and making offerings of food and drink, flowers or incense at gravesites. The golden rule of Confucianism is "do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you." Confucianism is a term that Westerners coined; there is no equivalent in any Chinese dialect. Over time, Confucian teachings became closely tied to the rituals and beliefs associated with Buddhism and Taoism. Together, the tenets of these three religious philosophies became known as The Three Teachings. All three are deeply embedded in Chinese culture.Religion vs. PhilosophyScholars disagree about whether Confucianism should be considered a religion or a philosophy. It began as a revival of an earlier religious tradition and has some characteristics of the Western framework of religion. There are also Confucian temples where important community and civic rituals happen. Confucianism does not, however, fit neatly into the Western concept of religion. There are no Confucian gods, and Confucianism focuses neither on the creation of the Earth or human life nor the afterlife. Although many people emphasize that Confucianism is both a religion and a philosophy, it is better understood as an ethical guide to life in the here and now.Confucian TeachingsThe main idea of Confucianism is the importance of having a good moral character, which can affect the world around a person through the idea of cosmic harmony. This moral character is achieved through the virtue of ren, or "humanity," which leads to more virtuous behaviors, such as respect, altruism and humility. If an emperor has moral perfection, his rule will be peaceful and benevolent. Natural disasters and conflict, on the other hand, are a natural consequence of straying from ancient teachings. Confucius believed in the importance of education in order to create this virtuous character. He thought that people are essentially good yet may have strayed from the appropriate forms of conduct. Rituals in Confucianism were designed to bring about this respectful attitude and create a sense of community within a group.The idea of "filial piety," or devotion to family, is key to Confucius thought. This devotion can take the form of ancestor worship, submission to parental authority or the use of family metaphors, such as "son of heaven," to describe the emperor and his government. The family is the most important group for Confucian ethics, and devotion to family can only strengthen the society surrounding it.Confucianism Past and PresentWhile Confucius gave his name to Confucianism, he is understood as a spiritual leader as opposed to the founder of a new religion or philosophy. This is in part due to the fact that Confucius was not the first person to discuss many of the concepts that became central to Confucianism. Indeed, Confucius was concerned with the preservation of traditional Chinese knowledge from earlier thinkers, such as such as Zhougong, a leader of China in the 11th century. Confucius viewed Zhougong as a hero because he willingly and peacefully transferred power to his nephew, maintaining harmony in Chinese society. Some practices associated with Confucianism, such as ancestor worship, also appear to predate Confucius. This suggests that Confucianism incorporated existing customs.After Confucius's death, several of his disciples compiled his wisdom and carried on his work. The most famous of these disciples were Mencius and Xunzi, both of whom further developed Confucian thought and ideals.Confucianism includes strict rules about class in Chinese society, which contributed to the stratification of ancient Chinese society. China was divided into four social classes: the noble or scholar elite class, the landowners and farmers, craftsmen, and merchants (who were lowest on the scale because Confucius argued against luxury). People were taught to stay in their social classes to create social harmony, which discouraged anyone from rising in status. Women were considered a different and lower social class than men. According to Confucian rules, women had to obey their male family members, including their sons. Practices like feet binding became more popular, and women's social power decreased as Confucian ideas had a resurgence during the Song period (960-1279 C.E.).Confucianism remains one of the most influential philosophies in China. During the Han Dynasty, emperor Wu Di (reigned 141-87 B.C.E.) made Confucianism the official state ideology. During this time, schools were established to teach Confucian ethics. Confucianism existed alongside Buddhism and Taoism for several centuries as one of the most important Chinese religions. In the Song Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.) the influence from Buddhism and Taoism brought about "Neo-Confucianism," which combined ideas from all three religions. However, in the Qing dynasty (1644-1912 C.E.), many scholars looked for a return to the older ideas of Confucianism, prompting a Confucian revival.Confucianism was denounced under Chairman Mao Zedong, but the current Chinese government recognizes that Confucianism is aligned with its socialist goals. For example, Confucian ideas regarding the hierarchy of society and concept of social responsibility fit with socialist communal values and strict government and societal structure.The audio, illustrations, photos, and videos are credited beneath the media asset, except for promotional images, which generally link to another page that contains the media credit. 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