



Religious Observance Calendar May 2023 - June 2024

May 2023

2	Ridvan Ends	Baha'I'
18	Feast of Ascension	Christian/Catholic
23-24	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'I'
25-27	Shavuot	Jewish
28	Pentecost	Christian/Catholic
29-30	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'I'

June

4	Trinity Sunday	Christian/Catholic
8	Corpus Christi Sunday	Christian/Catholic
16	Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	Christian/Catholic
16	Martyrdom of Guru Arijan Dev Sahib	Sikh
24	Nativity of St. John the Baptist	Christian/Catholic
28-29	Eid-ul-Adha	Islam
29	Feast of Saints Peter and Paul	Christian/Catholic

September

6-7	Krishna Janmashtami	Hindu
11	Paryushan	Jain
15-17	Rosh Hashanah	Jewish
24-25	Yom Kippur	Jewish
26-27	Mawlid-al-Nabi	Islam
29	Sukkot	Jewish

October

1-6	Sukkot	Jewish
6	Shemini Atzeret Begins	Jewish
7-8	Simchat Torah	Jewish
8	Shemini Atzeret Ends	Jewish
26-27	Birth of Bab	Baha'I'
27-28	Birth of Baha'ullah	Baha'I'

November

1	All Saints Day	Christian/Catholic
2	All Souls Day	Catholic
12	Diwali	Hindu/Jain
24	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib	Sikh
26	Feast of Christ the King	Christian/Catholic
27	Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib	Sikh
28	Ascension Of Abdu'l-Baha	Baha'I'

December

3	Advent Season	Christian
3	Feast of St. Francis Xavier	Christian/Catholic
7	Hanukkah Begins	Jewish
8	Feast of Immaculate Conception	Christian/Catholic

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8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception	Christian/Catholic
12	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe	Christian/Catholic
15	Hanukkah Ends	Jewish
25	Christmas	Christian
26	Kwanzaa	African-American

January 2024

1	Feast of Mary Mother of God	Christian/Catholic
1	Oshogatsu	Shinto
6	Epiphany	Christian/Catholic
7	Christmas	Eastern Orthodox
17	Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib	Sikh
18	Bodhi Day	Buddhist

February

14	Ash Wednesday	Christian/Catholic
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March

8	Maha Shivaratri	Hindu
10	Ramadan Begins	Islam
15	Shri Ramakrishna Javanti	Hindu
19-20	Naw-Ruz	Baha'I'
20-21	Nowruz	Persian
23-24	Purim	Jewish
24	Palm Sunday	Easter Orthodox/Christian
25	Feast of the Annunciation	Christian/Catholic
29	Good Friday	Christian/Catholic
31	Easter	Eastern Orthodox/Christian/Catholic

April

9	Ramadan Ends	Islam
9-10	Eid al-Fitr	Islam
13	Vaisakhi	Sikh
17	Ravami	Hindu
21	Ridvan Begins	Baha'I'
22	Passover Begins	Jewish
23	Vesak	Buddhist
28	Holy Thursday	Eastern Orthodox/Christian
29	Good Friday	Eastern Orthodox/Christian
30	Passover Ends	Jewish

May

2	Ridvan Ends	Baha'I'
9	Feast of Ascension	Christian/Catholic
19	Pentecost	Christian/Catholic
22	Declaration of the Bab	Baha'I'
26	Trinity Sunday	Christian/Catholic
29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'I'
30	Corpus Christi Sunday	Christian/Corpus

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June

7	Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	Christian Catholic
11-13	Shavuot	Jewish
16	Martyrdom of Guru	Sikh
16-17	Eid-ul-Adha	Islam

(12) Twelve Major Religions:

Baha'i

The **Bahá'í Faith** ([/bə'hɑːʔiː, bə'hɑɪ/](#); Persian: بهائی *Bahā'ī*) is a relatively new religion^[a] teaching the [essential worth of all religions](#) and [the unity of all people](#).^[b] Established by [Bahá'u'lláh](#) in the 19th century, it initially developed in Iran and parts of the Middle East, where it has faced ongoing persecution since its inception.^[13] The religion is estimated to have [over five million adherents](#), known as Bahá'ís, spread throughout most of the world's countries and territories.^[14]

The religion has three central figures: the [Báb](#) (1819–1850), considered a herald who taught that God would soon send a [prophet](#) in the same way of [Jesus](#) or [Muhammad](#), and who was executed by Iranian authorities in 1850; [Bahá'u'lláh](#) (1817–1892), who claimed to be that prophet in 1863 and faced exile and imprisonment for most of his life; and his son, ['Abdu'l-Bahá](#) (1844–1921), who was released from confinement in 1908 and made teaching trips to Europe and the United States. After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death in 1921, leadership of the religion fell to his grandson [Shoghi Effendi](#) (1897–1957). Bahá'ís annually elect local, regional, and national [Spiritual Assemblies](#) that govern the religion's affairs. Every five years the members of all National Spiritual Assemblies elect the [Universal House of Justice](#), the nine-member supreme governing institution of the worldwide Bahá'í community that is located in [Haifa](#), Israel, near the [Shrine of the Báb](#).

According to the [Bahá'í teachings](#), [God](#) is single and all-powerful. Bahá'u'lláh taught that religion is revealed in an orderly and progressive way by [Manifestations of God](#), who are the founders of [major world religions](#) throughout history; [Buddha](#), [Jesus](#), and [Muhammad](#) are noted as the most recent of these before the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'ís regard the major religions as fundamentally unified in purpose, though varied in social practices and interpretations. The Bahá'í Faith stresses the unity of all people, explicitly rejecting [racism](#) and [nationalism](#). At the heart of Bahá'í teachings is the goal of a [unified world order](#) that ensures the prosperity of all nations, races, creeds, and classes.^{[15][16]}

Letters written by Bahá'u'lláh to various people, including some heads of state, have been collected and assembled into a canon of [Bahá'í scripture](#). This includes works by his son ['Abdu'l-Bahá](#), and [the Báb](#), who is



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regarded as Bahá'u'lláh's forerunner. Prominent among Bahá'í literature are the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, *Some Answered Questions*, and *The Dawn-Breakers*.

Buddhism

Buddhism ([/ˈbʊdɪzəm/](#), US: [/ˈbuːd-/](#))^{[1][2]} is an Indian religion and philosophy based on a series of original teachings attributed to Gautama Buddha.^[3] It originated in ancient India as a Sramana tradition sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, spreading through much of Asia. It is the world's fourth-largest religion^{[4][5]} with over 520 million followers, or over 7% of the global population, known as **Buddhists**.^{[6][7]} Buddhism encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs and spiritual practices largely based on the Buddha's teachings (born Siddhārtha Gautama in the 5th or 4th century BCE) and resulting interpreted philosophies. As expressed in the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, the goal of Buddhism is to overcome suffering (*duḥkha*) caused by desire and ignorance of reality's true nature, including impermanence (*anicca*) and the non-existence of the self (*anattā*).^[8] Most Buddhist traditions emphasize transcending the individual self through the attainment of Nirvana or by following the path of Buddhahood, ending the cycle of death and rebirth.^{[9][10][11]} Buddhist schools vary in their interpretation of the path to liberation, the relative importance and canonicity assigned to the various Buddhist texts, and their specific teachings and practices.^{[12][13]} Widely observed practices include meditation, observance of moral precepts, monasticism, taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and the cultivation of the Paramitas (perfections, or virtues).

Two major extant branches of Buddhism are generally recognized by scholars: Theravāda (Pali: "The School of the Elders") and Mahāyāna (Sanskrit: "The Great Vehicle"). Theravada has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Mahayana, which includes the traditions of Zen, Pure Land, Nichiren Buddhism, Tiantai Buddhism (Tendai), and Shingon, is practiced prominently in Nepal, Malaysia, Bhutan, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Vajrayana, a body of teachings attributed to Indian adepts, may be viewed as a separate branch or as an aspect of Mahayana Buddhism.^[14] Tibetan Buddhism, which preserves the Vajrayana teachings of eighth-century India, is practiced in the countries of the Himalayan region, Mongolia,^[15] and Kalmykia.^[16] Historically, until the early 2nd millennium, Buddhism was also widely practiced in Afghanistan and it also had a foothold to some extent in other places including the Philippines, the Maldives, and Uzbekistan.



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Christianity

Christianity is an [Abrahamic, monotheistic religion](#) based on the [life and teachings](#) of [Jesus of Nazareth](#). It is the [world's largest religion](#), with about 2.4 billion followers.^[1] Its adherents, known as [Christians](#), make up a majority of the population in [157 countries and territories](#),^[2] and believe that [Jesus](#) is the [Christ](#), whose coming as the [Messiah](#) was [prophesied](#) in the [Hebrew Bible](#) (called the [Old Testament](#) in Christianity) and chronicled in the [New Testament](#).^[3]

Christianity remains [culturally diverse](#) in its [Western](#) and [Eastern branches](#), as well as in its doctrines concerning [justification and the nature of salvation](#), [ecclesiology](#), [ordination](#), and [Christology](#). The [creeds](#) of various [Christian denominations](#) generally hold in common [Jesus as the Son of God](#)—the [Logos incarnated](#)—who [ministered](#), [suffered](#), and [died on a cross](#), but [rose from the dead](#) for the [salvation](#) of mankind; and referred to as [the gospel](#), meaning the "good news". Describing [Jesus' life and teachings](#) are the four [canonical gospels](#) of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), [Luke](#) and [John](#), with the [Old Testament](#) as the [gospel's](#) respected background.

[Christianity began](#) as a [Second Temple Judaic sect](#) in the [1st century](#) in the [Roman province of Judea](#). [Jesus' apostles](#) and their followers [spread](#) around the [Levant](#), [Europe](#), [Anatolia](#), [Mesopotamia](#), [Transcaucasia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Ethiopia](#), despite [initial persecution](#). It soon attracted [gentile God-fearers](#), which led to a departure from [Jewish customs](#), and, after the [Fall of Jerusalem, AD 70](#) which ended the [Temple-based Judaism](#), [Christianity slowly separated from Judaism](#). Emperor [Constantine the Great](#) decriminalized Christianity in the Roman Empire by the [Edict of Milan](#) (313), later convening the [Council of Nicaea](#) (325) where Early Christianity was consolidated into what would become the [State church of the Roman Empire](#) (380). The early history of Christianity's united church before major [schisms](#) is sometimes referred to as the "[Great Church](#)" (though divergent sects existed at the same time, including [Gnostics](#) and [Jewish Christians](#)). The [Church of the East](#) split after the [Council of Ephesus](#) (431) and [Oriental Orthodoxy](#) split after the [Council of Chalcedon](#) (451) over differences in [Christology](#),^[4] while the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) and the [Catholic Church](#) separated in the [East–West Schism](#) (1054), especially over the authority of the [bishop of Rome](#). [Protestantism](#) split into numerous denominations from the Catholic Church in the [Reformation era](#) (16th century) over [theological](#) and [ecclesiological](#) disputes, most predominantly [on the issue of justification](#) and the [primacy of the bishop of Rome](#). Christianity played a [prominent role](#) in the [development](#) of [Western civilization](#), particularly in Europe from [late antiquity](#) and the [Middle Ages](#).^{[5][6][7][8]} Following the [Age of Discovery](#) (15th–17th century), Christianity was spread into the [Americas](#), [Oceania](#), [sub-Saharan Africa](#), and the rest of the world via [missionary work](#).^{[9][10][11]}

The four largest [branches of Christianity](#) are the [Catholic Church](#) (1.3 billion/50.1%), [Protestantism](#) (920 million/36.7%), the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) (230 million), and the [Oriental Orthodox churches](#) (62 million)



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(Orthodox churches combined at 11.9%),^{[12][13]} though thousands of smaller church communities exist despite efforts toward unity (ecumenism).^[14] Despite a decline in adherence in the West, Christianity remains the dominant religion in the region, with about 70% of the population identifying as Christian.^[15] Christianity is growing in Africa and Asia, the world's most populous continents.^[16] Christians remain persecuted in some regions of the world, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia, and South Asia.^{[17][18]}

Confucianism

Confucianism, also known as **Ruism**, is a system of thought and behavior originating in ancient China. Various descriptions include tradition, a philosophy, a religion, a humanistic or rationalistic religion, a way of governing, or simply a way of life.^[1] Confucianism developed from what was later called the Hundred Schools of Thought from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE).

Confucius considered himself a transmitter of cultural values inherited from the Xia (c. 2070–1600 BCE), Shang (c. 1600–1046 BCE) and Zhou dynasties (c. 1046–256 BCE).^[2] Confucianism was suppressed during the Legalist and autocratic Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), but survived. During the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Confucian approaches edged out the "proto-Taoist" Huang-Lao as the official ideology, while the emperors mixed both with the realist techniques of Legalism.^[3]

A Confucian revival began during the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). In the late Tang, Confucianism developed in response to Buddhism and Taoism and was reformulated as Neo-Confucianism. This reinvigorated form was adopted as the basis of the imperial exams and the core philosophy of the scholar official class in the Song dynasty (960–1297). The abolition of the examination system in 1905 marked the end of official Confucianism. The intellectuals of the New Culture Movement of the early twentieth century blamed Confucianism for China's weaknesses. They searched for new doctrines to replace Confucian teachings; some of these new ideologies include the "Three Principles of the People" with the establishment of the Republic of China, and then Maoism under the People's Republic of China. In the late twentieth century, the Confucian work ethic has been credited with the rise of the East Asian economy.^[3]

With particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, rather than on an otherworldly source of spiritual values,^[4] the core of Confucianism is humanistic.^[5] According to Herbert Fingarette's conceptualisation of Confucianism as a philosophical system which regards "the secular as sacred",^[6] Confucianism transcends the dichotomy between religion and humanism, considering the



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ordinary activities of human life—and especially human relationships—as a manifestation of the sacred,^[7] because they are the expression of humanity's moral nature (*xìng* 性), which has a transcendent anchorage in Heaven (*Tiān* 天).^[8] While *Tiān* has some characteristics that overlap the category of godhead, it is primarily an *impersonal absolute principle*, like the *Dào* (道) or the *Brahman*. Confucianism focuses on the practical order that is given by a this-worldly awareness of the *Tiān*.^[9] Confucian liturgy (called 儒 *rú*, or sometimes **simplified Chinese: 正统; traditional Chinese: 正統; pinyin: zhèngtǒng**, meaning 'orthopraxy') led by Confucian priests or "sages of rites" (礼生; 禮生; *lǐshēng*) to worship the gods in public and ancestral **Chinese temples** is preferred on certain occasions, by Confucian religious groups and for civil religious rites, over Taoist or popular ritual.^[10]

The worldly concern of Confucianism rests upon the belief that human beings are fundamentally good, and teachable, improvable, and perfectible through personal and communal endeavor, especially **self-cultivation** and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of virtue in a morally organized world. Some of the basic Confucian ethical concepts and practices include *rén*, *yì*, and *lǐ*, and *zhì*. *Rén* (仁, 'benevolence' or 'humaneness') is the essence of the human being which manifests as compassion. It is the virtue-form of Heaven.^[11] *Yì* (义; 義) is the upholding of righteousness and the moral disposition to do good. *Lǐ* (礼; 禮) is a system of ritual norms and propriety that determines how a person should properly act in everyday life in harmony with the law of Heaven. *Zhì* (智) is the ability to see what is right and fair, or the converse, in the behaviors exhibited by others. Confucianism holds one in contempt, either passively or actively, for failure to uphold the cardinal moral values of *rén* and *yì*.

Traditionally, cultures and countries in the **East Asian cultural sphere** are strongly influenced by Confucianism, including **China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam**, as well as various territories settled predominantly by **Han Chinese people**, such as **Singapore**. Today, it has been credited for shaping **East Asian societies and overseas Chinese communities**, and to some extent, other parts of Asia.^{[12][13]} In the last decades there have been talks of a "Confucian Revival" in the academic and the scholarly community,^{[14][15]} and there has been a grassroots proliferation of various types of **Confucian churches**.^[16] In late 2015 **many Confucian personalities** formally established a national **Holy Confucian Church** (孔圣会; 孔聖會; *Kǒngshèng huì*) in China to unify the many Confucian congregations and civil society organizations.



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Hinduism

Hinduism (/ˈhɪnduːɪzəm/)^[1] is an [Indian religion](#) and *dharma*, or way of life.^{[note 1][note 2]} It is the [world's third-largest religion](#), with over 1.2 billion followers, or 15–16% of the global population, known as [Hindus](#).^{[2][web 1][web 2]} The word *Hindu* is an [exonym](#),^{[3][4][note 3]} and while Hinduism has been called the oldest religion in the world,^[note 4] many practitioners refer to their religion as *Sanātana Dharma* (Sanskrit: सनातन धर्म, lit. "the Eternal Dharma"), which refers to the idea that its origins lie beyond human history, as revealed in the [Hindu texts](#).^{[5][6][7][8][note 5][excessive citations]} Another, though less fitting,^[9] self-designation is *Vaidika dharma*,^{[10][11][12][13]} the 'dharma related to the [Vedas](#).'^[web 3]

Hinduism is a diverse system of thought marked by a range of [philosophies](#) and shared concepts, [rituals](#), [cosmological](#) systems, [pilgrimage sites](#), and shared textual sources that discuss theology, [metaphysics](#), [mythology](#), Vedic [yajna](#), [yoga](#), [agamic](#) rituals, and [temple building](#), among other topics.^[14] Prominent themes in Hindu beliefs include the four [Puruṣārthas](#), the proper goals or aims of human life; namely, [dharma](#) (ethics/duties), [artha](#) (prosperity/work), [kama](#) (desires/passions) and [moksha](#) (liberation/freedom from the passions and the cycle of death and [rebirth](#)),^{[15][16]} as well as [karma](#) (action, intent and consequences) and [saṃsāra](#) (cycle of death and rebirth).^{[17][18]} Hinduism prescribes the eternal duties, such as honesty, refraining from injuring living beings (*Ahiṃsā*), patience, forbearance, self-restraint, virtue, and compassion, among others.^{[web 4][19]} Hindu practices include rituals such as [puja](#) (worship) and recitations, [japa](#), meditation ([dhyāna](#)), family-oriented [rites of passage](#), annual festivals, and occasional pilgrimages. Along with the practice of various [yogas](#), some Hindus leave their social world and material possessions and engage in lifelong [Sannyasa](#) (monasticism) in order to achieve moksha.^[20]

Hindu texts are classified into [Śruti](#) ("heard") and [Smṛti](#) ("remembered"), the major scriptures of which are the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Purānas*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyana*, and the *Āgamas*.^{[17][21]} There are six [āstika](#) schools of Hindu philosophy, who recognise the authority of the Vedas, namely [Sāṅkhya](#), [Yoga](#), [Nyāya](#), [Vaisheshika](#), [Mimāṃsā](#) and [Vedānta](#).^{[22][23][24]} While the [Puranic chronology](#) presents a genealogy of thousands of years, starting with the Vedic *rishis*, scholars regard Hinduism as a fusion^[note 6] or synthesis^{[25][note 7]} of [Brahmanical orthopraxy](#)^[note 8] with various Indian cultures,^{[26][note 9]} having diverse roots^{[27][note 10]} and no specific founder.^[28] This [Hindu synthesis](#) emerged after the Vedic period, between c. 500^[29]–200^[30] BCE and c. 300 CE,^[29] in the period of the [Second Urbanisation](#) and the early [classical period](#)




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of Hinduism, when the [Epics](#) and the first Purānas were composed.^{[29][30]} It flourished in the [medieval period](#), with the [decline of Buddhism in India](#).^[31]

Currently, the four largest [denominations](#) of Hinduism are [Vaishnavism](#), [Shaivism](#), [Shaktism](#), and [Smartism](#).^{[32][33]} Sources of authority and eternal truths in the Hindu texts play an important role, but there is also a strong Hindu tradition of questioning authority in order to deepen the understanding of these truths and to further develop the tradition.^[34] Hinduism is the most widely professed faith in [India](#), [Nepal](#) and [Mauritius](#). Significant numbers of Hindu communities are found in [Southeast Asia](#) including in [Bali](#), [Indonesia](#),^[35] the [Caribbean](#), [North America](#), [Europe](#), [Oceania](#), [Africa](#), and [other regions](#).^{[36][37]}

Islam

Islam ([/ˈɪslɑːm/](#);^[a] Arabic: [الإِسْلَامُ](#), romanized: *al-ʾIslām*, [\[ɪsˈlɑːm\]](#) ( listen) "submission [to God]"^[1] is an [Abrahamic monotheistic](#) religion started by the prophet [Muhammad](#) in the early 7th century.^{[2][3]} It is the [world's second-largest religion](#) with 1.9 billion followers, or 24.9% of the world's population,^{[4][5]} known as [Muslims](#).^[6] Muslims make up a majority of the population in [47 countries](#).^{[7][8]} Islam teaches that [God](#) is [merciful](#), [all-powerful](#), and [unique](#),^[9] and has guided humanity through [prophets](#), [revealed scriptures](#), and [natural signs](#).^{[3][10]} The primary scriptures of Islam are the [Quran](#), believed to be the verbatim word of God, as well as the teachings and normative examples (called the [sunnah](#), composed of accounts called [hadith](#)) of [Muhammad](#) (c. 570 – 632 CE).^[11]

Muslims believe that Islam is the complete and universal version of a [primordial faith](#) that was revealed many times before through prophets such as [Adam](#), [Abraham](#), [Moses](#), and [Jesus](#).^[12] Muslims consider the [Quran](#), in Arabic, to be the unaltered and final revelation of God.^[13] Like other Abrahamic religions, Islam also teaches a final judgment with the righteous rewarded in [paradise](#) and the unrighteous punished in [hell](#).^[14] Religious concepts and practices include the [Five Pillars of Islam](#), which are obligatory acts of worship, as well as following Islamic law ([sharia](#)), which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, from [banking](#) and [welfare](#) to [women](#) and the [environment](#).^{[15][16]} The cities of [Mecca](#), [Medina](#) and [Jerusalem](#) are home to the three [holiest sites in Islam](#).^[17]

From a historical point of view, Islam originated in early 7th century CE in the [Arabian Peninsula](#), in [Mecca](#),^[18] and by the 8th century, the [Umayyad Caliphate](#) extended from [Iberia](#) in the west to the [Indus River](#)



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in the east. The [Islamic Golden Age](#) refers to the period traditionally dated from the 8th century to the 13th century, during the [Abbasid Caliphate](#), when much of the historically [Muslim world](#) was experiencing a [scientific](#), [economic](#), and cultural flourishing.^{[19][20][21]} The expansion of the Muslim world involved various [caliphates and states](#) such as the [Ottoman Empire](#), trade, and [conversion to Islam](#) by [missionary activities](#) (*dawah*).^[22]

Most Muslims are of one of two [denominations](#): [Sunni](#) (85–90%)^[23] or [Shia](#) (10–15%).^{[24][25][26]} Sunni and Shia [differences](#) arose from disagreement over the [succession to Muhammad](#) and acquired broader political significance, as well as [theological](#) and [juridical](#) dimensions.^[27] About 12% of Muslims live in [Indonesia](#), the most populous Muslim-majority country,^[28] 31% live in [South Asia](#),^[29] the largest percentage of Muslims in the world,^[30] 20% in the [Middle East–North Africa](#), where it is the dominant religion,^[31] and 15% in [sub-Saharan Africa](#).^[31] Sizable Muslim communities can also be found in the [Americas](#), [China](#), and [Europe](#).^{[32][33]} Islam is the [fastest-growing major religion](#) in the world.^{[34][35]}

Jainism

Jainism ([/ˈdʒeɪnɪzəm/](#)), traditionally known as **Jain Dharma**, is an ancient [Indian religion](#). It is one of the oldest Indian religions. The three main pillars of Jainism are [ahimsā](#) (non-violence), [anekāntavāda](#) (non-absolutism), and [aparigraha](#) (non-attachment).

Jains take five main vows: [ahimsā](#) (non-violence), [satya](#) (truth), [asteya](#) (not stealing), [brahmacharya](#) (sexual continence), and [aparigraha](#) (non-possessiveness). These principles have affected Jain culture in many ways, such as leading to a predominantly vegetarian lifestyle. [Parasparopagraho jīvānām](#) (the function of souls is to help one another) is the faith's motto and the [Namōkāra mantra](#) is its most common and basic prayer.

Jainism traces its spiritual ideas and history through a succession of twenty-four leaders or [Tirthankaras](#), with the first in the current time cycle being [Rishabhadeva](#), whom the tradition holds to have lived millions of years ago; the twenty-third [tirthankara](#) [Parshvanatha](#), whom historians date to 9th century BCE; and the twenty-fourth [tirthankara](#), [Mahavira](#) around 600 BCE. Jainism is considered to be an eternal [dharma](#) with the [tirthankaras](#) guiding every time cycle of the [cosmology](#).

Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions in practice to this day. It has two major ancient sub-traditions, [Digambaras](#) and [Śvētāmbaras](#), with different views on ascetic practices, gender and which texts can be considered canonical; both have [mendicants](#) supported by [laypersons](#) ([śrāvakas](#) and [śrāvikas](#)). The Śvētāmbara tradition in turn has three subtraditions: [Mandirvāsī](#), [Terapanthi](#) and [Sthānakavasī](#).^[1] The



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religion has between four and five million followers, known as **Jains**, who reside mostly in [India](#). Outside India, some of the largest communities are in [Canada](#), [Europe](#), and the [United States](#), with [Japan](#) hosting a fast-growing community of converts.^[2] Major festivals include *Paryushana* and *Das Lakshana*, *Ashtanika*, *Mahavir Janma Kalyanak*, *Akshaya Tertiya*, and *Diwali*.

Estimates for the population of Jains differ from just over four million to twelve million.^[3]

Judaism

Judaism ([Hebrew](#): יהודה, *Yahadut*; originally from Hebrew יהודה, *Yehudah*, "Judah", via [Greek](#) Ἰουδαϊσμός *Ioudaismos*;^{[6][7][8]} the term itself is of Anglo-Latin origin c. 1400^[9]) is an [Abrahamic](#), [monotheistic](#), and [ethnic religion](#) comprising the collective [religious](#), [cultural](#), and [legal](#) tradition and civilization of the [Jewish people](#), also sometimes called [Israelites](#).^{[10][11]} Judaism is considered by religious Jews to be the expression of the [covenant](#) that [God](#) established with the [Children of Israel](#).^[12] It encompasses a wide body of texts, practices, theological positions, and forms of organization. The [Torah](#) is part of the larger text known as the [Tanakh](#) or the [Hebrew Bible](#), and supplemental oral tradition represented by later texts such as the [Midrash](#) and the [Talmud](#). With between 14.5 and 17.4 million adherents worldwide,^[13] Judaism is the tenth [largest religion in the world](#).

Within Judaism there are a variety of [religious movements](#), most of which emerged from [Rabbinic Judaism](#),^{[14][15]} which holds that [God](#) revealed his laws and [commandments](#) to [Moses](#) on [Mount Sinai](#) in the form of both the [Written](#) and [Oral Torah](#).^[16] Historically, all or part of this assertion was challenged by various groups such as the [Sadducees](#) and [Hellenistic Judaism](#) during the [Second Temple period](#);^{[14][17]} the [Karaites](#) during the early and later medieval period; and among segments of the modern non-Orthodox denominations.^[18] Some modern branches of Judaism such as [Humanistic Judaism](#) may be considered [secular](#) or [nontheistic](#).^{[19][20]} Today, the largest [Jewish religious movements](#) are [Orthodox Judaism](#) ([Haredi Judaism](#) and [Modern Orthodox Judaism](#)), [Conservative Judaism](#), and [Reform Judaism](#). Major sources of difference between these groups are their approaches to [Jewish law](#), the authority of the [Rabbinic tradition](#), and the significance of the [State of Israel](#).^{[3][21][22]} Orthodox Judaism maintains that the [Torah](#) and [Jewish law](#) are divine in origin, eternal and unalterable, and that they should be strictly followed. Conservative and Reform Judaism are more [liberal](#), with Conservative Judaism generally promoting a more traditionalist interpretation of Judaism's requirements than Reform Judaism. A typical Reform position is that [Jewish law](#) should be viewed as a set of general guidelines rather than as a set of restrictions and obligations whose



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observance is required of all Jews.^[23] Historically, [special courts](#) enforced Jewish law; today, these courts still exist but the practice of Judaism is mostly voluntary.^[24] Authority on theological and legal matters is not vested in any one person or organization, but in the sacred texts and the [rabbis](#) and scholars who interpret them.

Judaism has its roots as an [organized religion](#) in the [Middle East](#) during the [Bronze Age](#).^[25] Modern Judaism evolved from [ancient Israelite religion](#) around 500 BCE,^[26] and is considered one of the oldest monotheistic religions.^{[27][28]} The [Hebrews](#) and [Israelites](#) were already referred to as "Jews" in later books of the Tanakh such as the [Book of Esther](#), with the term Jews replacing the title "Children of Israel".^[29] Judaism's texts, traditions and values strongly influenced later [Abrahamic religions](#), including [Christianity](#) and [Islam](#).^{[30][31]} [Hebraism](#), like [Hellenism](#), played a seminal role in the formation of [Western civilization](#) through its impact as a core background element of [Early Christianity](#).^[32]

Jews are an [ethnoreligious group](#)^[33] including those born Jewish, in addition to [converts to Judaism](#). In 2019, the [world Jewish population](#) was estimated at about 14.7 million, or roughly 0.25% of the total world population.^{[34][35]} About 46.9% of all Jews reside in Israel and another 38.8% reside in the United States and Canada, with most of the remainder living in Europe, and other minority groups spread throughout Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Australia.^[36]

Shinto

Shinto ([Japanese](#): 神道, [romanized](#): *Shintō*) is a [religion](#) which originated in [Japan](#). Classified as an [East Asian religion](#) by [scholars of religion](#), its practitioners often regard it as Japan's [indigenous religion](#) and as a [nature religion](#). Scholars sometimes call its practitioners *Shintoists*, although adherents rarely use that term themselves. There is no central authority in control of Shinto and much diversity exists among practitioners.

Shinto is [polytheistic](#) and revolves around the *kami*, supernatural entities believed to inhabit all things. The link between the *kami* and the natural world has led to Shinto being considered [animistic](#) and [pantheistic](#). The *kami* are worshiped at *kamidana* household shrines, family shrines, and *jinja* public shrines. The latter are staffed by priests, known as *kannushi*, who oversee offerings of food and drink to the specific *kami* enshrined at that location. This is done to cultivate harmony between humans and *kami* and to solicit the latter's blessing. Other common rituals include the *kagura* dances, [rites of passage](#), and seasonal festivals. Public shrines also supply religious paraphernalia such as [amulets](#) to the religion's adherents. Shinto does not emphasize specific moral codes although it places a major conceptual focus on ensuring purity, largely



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by cleaning practices such as ritual washing and bathing. Shinto has no single creator or specific doctrinal text, but exists in a diverse range of local and regional forms.

Although historians debate at what point it is suitable to refer to Shinto as a distinct religion, *kami* veneration has been traced back to Japan's [Yayoi period](#) (300 BCE to 300 CE). [Buddhism](#) entered Japan at the end of the [Kofun period](#) (300 to 538 CE) and spread rapidly. [Religious syncretization](#) made *kami* worship and Buddhism functionally inseparable, a process called *shinbutsu-shūgō*. The *kami* came to be viewed as part of [Buddhist cosmology](#) and were increasingly depicted anthropomorphically. The earliest written tradition regarding *kami* worship was recorded in the 8th-century *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. In ensuing centuries, *shinbutsu-shūgō* was adopted by Japan's Imperial household. During the [Meiji era](#) (1868 to 1912 CE), Japan's [nationalist](#) leadership expelled Buddhist influence from *kami* worship and formed [State Shinto](#), which many historians regard as the origin of Shinto as a distinct religion. Shrines came under growing government influence and citizens were encouraged to worship the [emperor](#) as a *kami*. With the formation of the [Japanese Empire](#) in the early 20th century, Shinto was exported to other areas of East Asia. Following Japan's defeat in [World War II](#), Shinto was formally [separated from the state](#).

Shinto is primarily found in Japan, where there are around 100,000 public shrines, although practitioners are also found abroad. Numerically, it is Japan's largest religion, the second being Buddhism. Most of the country's population takes part in both Shinto and Buddhist activities, especially festivals, reflecting a common view in [Japanese culture](#) that the beliefs and practices of different religions need not be exclusive. Aspects of Shinto have also been incorporated into various [Japanese new religious movements](#).

Sikhism

Sikhism ([/ˈsɪkɪzəm/](#)) or **Sikhi** (Punjabi: ਸਿੱਖੀ *Sikkhī*, [\[ˈsɪkhiː\]](#), from ਸਿੱਖ, *Sikh*, 'disciple', 'seeker', or 'learner')^[i]

is an [Indian religion](#) that originated in the [Punjab](#) region of the [Indian subcontinent](#)^[ii] around the end of the 15th century CE.^{[1][2][3][4][5][6]} Sikhism is one of the youngest of the [major religions](#) and the [world's fifth-largest organized religion](#),^[7] with about 25–30 million [Sikhs](#) as of the early 21st century.^{[8][9]}

Sikhism developed from the spiritual teachings of [Guru Nanak](#), the first Guru (1469–1539),^[10] and of the nine [Sikh gurus](#) who succeeded him. The tenth guru, [Gobind Singh](#) (1666–1708), named the [Sikh](#) scripture *Guru Granth Sahib* as his successor, bringing to a close the line of human gurus and establishing the scripture as the last eternal 11th living guru, a religious spiritual/life guide for Sikhs.^{[11][12][13]} [Guru Nanak](#) taught that living an "active, creative, and practical life" of "truthfulness, fidelity, self-control and purity" is above metaphysical truth, and that the ideal man "establishes union with God, knows His Will, and carries out that



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Will".^[14] [Guru Hargobind](#), the sixth Sikh Guru (1606–1644), established the concept of mutual co-existence of the *miri* ('political'/'temporal') and *piri* ('spiritual') realms.^[15]

The Sikh scripture opens with the *Mul Mantar* (ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤਰ), fundamental prayer about *ik onkar* (ੴ, 'One God').^{[16][17]} The core beliefs of Sikhism, articulated in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, include [faith](#) and [meditation](#) on the name of the [one creator](#); [divine](#) unity and equality of all humankind; engaging in *seva* ('[selfless service](#)'); striving for justice for the [benefit and prosperity of all](#); and honest conduct and livelihood while living a householder's life.^{[18][19][20]} Following this standard, Sikhism rejects claims that any particular religious tradition has a monopoly on [Absolute Truth](#).^{[iii][21]}

Sikhism emphasizes *simran* (ਸਿਮਰਨ, meditation and remembrance of the teachings of Gurus),^[22] which can be expressed musically through *kirtan*, or internally through *naam japna* ('meditation on His name') as a means to feel God's presence. It teaches followers to transform the "[Five Thieves](#)" (i.e. lust, rage, greed, attachment, and ego).^[23]

The religion developed and evolved in times of [religious persecution](#), gaining converts from both [Hinduism](#) and [Islam](#).^[24] [Mughal rulers](#) of India tortured and executed two of the Sikh gurus—[Guru Arjan](#) (1563–1605) and [Guru Tegh Bahadur](#) (1621–1675)—after [they refused to convert to Islam](#).^{[25][26][27][28][29]} The persecution of Sikhs triggered the founding of the *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as an order to protect the [freedom of conscience](#) and [religion](#),^{[25][30]} with members expressing the qualities of a *Sant-Sipāhī* ('saint-soldier').^{[31][32]}

Taoism

Taoism ([/ˈtaʊ-/](#)), or **Daoism** ([/ˈdaʊɪzəm/](#)), is a philosophical and spiritual tradition of [Chinese](#) origin which emphasizes living in harmony with the *Tao* ([Chinese](#): 道; [pinyin](#): *Dào*; [lit.](#) 'Way', or *Dao*). In Taoism, the *Tao* is the source, pattern and substance of everything that exists.^{[2][3]} Taoism teaches about the various disciplines for achieving "perfection" by becoming one with the unplanned rhythms of the all, called "the way" or "Tao".^{[2][4]} Taoist ethics vary depending on the particular school, but in general tend to emphasize *wu wei* (action without intention), "naturalness", simplicity, spontaneity and the [Three Treasures](#): 慈, "compassion", 儉, "frugality" and 不敢為天下先, "humility".

The roots of Taoism go back at least to the 4th century BCE. Early Taoism drew its cosmological notions from the [School of Yinyang](#) (Naturalists) and was deeply influenced by one of the oldest texts of [Chinese culture](#), the *I Ching* (*Yi Jing*), which expounds a philosophical system about how to keep human behavior in



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accordance with the alternating cycles of [nature](#). The "Legalist" [Shen Buhai](#) (c. 400 – c. 337 BCE) may also have been a major influence, expounding a [realpolitik](#) of *wu wei*.^[5] The *Tao Te Ching* (*Dao De Jing*), a compact book containing teachings attributed to [Lao Tzu](#) (老子; *Lǎozǐ*; *Lao³ Tzǔ³*), is widely considered the keystone work of the Taoist tradition, together with the later [writings of Zhuangzi](#).

Taoism has had a profound influence on Chinese culture in the course of the centuries and [Taoists](#) (*dàoshi*, "masters of the Tao"), a title traditionally attributed only to the clergy and not to their lay followers, usually take care to note the distinction between their ritual tradition and the practices of [Chinese folk religion](#) and non-Taoist [vernacular ritual orders](#), which are often mistakenly identified as pertaining to Taoism. [Chinese alchemy](#) (especially [neidan](#)), [Chinese astrology](#), [Chan \(Zen\) Buddhism](#), several [martial arts](#), [traditional Chinese medicine](#), [feng shui](#) and many styles of [qigong](#) have been intertwined with Taoism throughout history.

Today, the Taoist tradition is one of the [five religious doctrines](#) officially recognized by the [People's Republic of China](#).^[6] It is also a [major religion in Taiwan](#)^[7] and claims adherents in a number of other societies, in particular in [Hong Kong](#), [Macau](#) and [Southeast Asia](#).

Zoroastrian

Zoroastrianism or **Mazdayasna** is one of the world's oldest continuously practiced [religions](#), based on the teachings of the [Iranian-speaking](#) prophet [Zoroaster](#) (also known as *Zarathuštra* in [Avestan](#) or *Zartosht* in [Modern Persian](#)).^{[1][2]} Zoroastrianism has a [dualistic cosmology](#) of [good and evil](#) and an [eschatology](#) which predicts the ultimate conquest of evil by good.^[3] Zoroastrianism exalts an uncreated and benevolent deity of wisdom, [Ahura Mazda](#) (*Wise Lord*), as its supreme being.^[4] The unique historical features of Zoroastrianism, such as its [monotheism](#),^{[5][6][7][8][9]} [messianism](#), [judgment after death](#), [heaven](#) and [hell](#), and [free will](#) may have influenced other religious and philosophical systems, including [Second Temple Judaism](#), [Gnosticism](#), [Greek philosophy](#),^[10] [Christianity](#), [Islam](#),^[11] the [Bahá'í Faith](#).

With possible roots dating back to the Second Millennium BCE, Zoroastrianism enters [written history](#) in the 5th century BCE.^[12] It served as the [state religion](#) of the [ancient Iranian empires](#) for more than a millennium, from around 600 BCE to 650 CE, but [declined](#) from the 7th century CE onwards following the [Muslim conquest of Persia](#) of 633–654 and subsequent [persecution of the Zoroastrian people](#).^[13] Recent estimates place the current number of Zoroastrians at around 110,000–120,000^[14] at most, with the majority living in [India](#), [Iran](#), and [North America](#); their number has been thought to be declining.^{[15][16]}



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The most important texts of the religion are those contained within the *Avesta*, which includes as central the writings of Zoroaster known as the *Gathas*, poems within the *Yasna* that define the teachings of the Zoroaster, the main worship service of Zoroastrianism. The religious philosophy of Zoroaster divided the early Iranian gods of the Proto-Indo-Iranian tradition into *ahuras*^[17] and *daevas*,^[18] the latter of which were not considered worthy of worship. Zoroaster proclaimed that Ahura Mazda was the supreme creator, the creative and sustaining force of the universe through *Asha*,^[4] and that human beings are given a choice between supporting Ahura Mazda or not, making them responsible for their choices. Though Ahura Mazda has no equal contesting force, *Angra Mainyu* (destructive spirit/mentality), whose forces are born from *Aka Manah* (evil thought), is considered the main adversarial force of the religion, standing against *Spenta Mainyu* (creative spirit/mentality).^[19] Middle Persian literature developed Angra Mainyu further into Ahriman and advancing him to be the direct adversary to Ahura Mazda.^[20]

In Zoroastrianism, *Asha* (truth, cosmic order), the life force that originates from Ahura Mazda,^{[4][21]} stands in opposition to *Druj* (falsehood, deceit)^{[22][23]} and Ahura Mazda is considered to be all-good with no evil emanating from the deity.^[4] Ahura Mazda works in *gētīg* (the visible material realm) and *mēnōg* (the invisible spiritual and mental realm)^[24] through the seven (six when excluding Spenta Mainyu) *Amesha Spentas*^[25] (the direct emanations of Ahura Mazda).

Zoroastrianism is not entirely uniform in theological and philosophical thought, especially with historical and modern influences having a significant impact on individual and local beliefs, practices, values and vocabulary, sometimes merging with tradition and in other cases displacing it.^[26] In Zoroastrianism, the purpose in life is to become an *ashavan* (a master of Asha) and to bring happiness into the world, which contributes to the cosmic battle against evil. Zoroastrianism's core teachings include:

- Follow the Threefold Path of Asha: Humata, Huxta, Huvarshta (Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds).^[27]
- Charity is a way of keeping one's soul aligned with Asha and thus of spreading happiness.^[28]
- The spiritual equality and duty of men and women alike.^[29]
- Being good for the sake of goodness and without the hope of reward (see *Ashem Vohu*).