Buddhism

More than half the world's population live in countries where Buddhism is now, or has been, dominant. During the 20th century, Buddhism was subject to greater suppression than at any time in its history.

BUDDHISM IN ASIA

Countries with significant Buddhist populations
2006 or latest available data

- 85% and above
- 70% – 84%
- 40% – 69%
- 20% – 39%
- 10% – 19%
- below 10%
- some Buddhist centres
- other countries

Signs of growth or decline

- Buddhism controlled by communist/nationalist governments but re-asserting itself
- Buddhist monks and nuns
- Buddhist temples or monasteries
- declining Buddhist minorities
- new Buddhist movements

In 2005, most Buddhists in Russia lived in the republics of Buryatia (350,000), Kalmykia (150,000) and Tuva (130,000). The largest purpose-built Buddhist temple in Europe opened in Elista, Kalmykia, near the shores of the Caspian Sea.

RUSSIA

MONGOLIA: 2,000 (*1921: 110,000*); 150 (*1921: 700*)

2003: 46,000 (*pre-1959: 100,000 monks, 12,500 nuns*); 2003: 1,700 (*pre-1959: 6,000*)

200,000 (*pre-1949: 738,200*); 16,000

CHINA

There are over 100 million Buddhists in China.

Buddhism is the state religion in Bhutan, with 10 of the National Assembly's 150 seats and 2 of the 11 members of the Royal Advisory Council reserved for Buddhist monks.

Tibet

18,384 Tibetan monks and nuns, 50,000 Tibetan refugees in India

NEPAL: 5,247 Tibetan

BHUTAN: 12,000

BANGLADESH

INDIA

There are 8,826,000 Buddhists in India. Over 70% live in Maharashtra. Since 1956, many are converts from Dalit castes.

NORTH KOREA

SOUTH KOREA: 20,000

JAPAN

30,000 (75% are female monastics); 4,038

TAIWAN

19,634; 4,937

LAOS

400,000 including novices

BURMA

THAILAND

CAMBODIA

36,000

VIETNAM

267,818; 103,206 novices; 32,710

17,000; 14,000 novices; 6,000

SRI LANKA

Buddhism is the state religion in Cambodia and Thailand.

60,000 including 3,000 in Phnom Penh (*pre-1970: 65,063*)

3,700 (*pre-1970: 3,369*)

SINGAPORE

PHILIPPINES

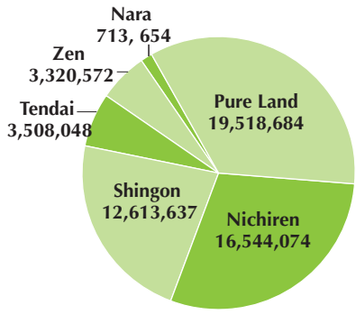
BRUNEI

MALAYSIA

INDONESIA

Buddhist traditions in Japan

Traditions' share of membership
2004
Total membership: 56,218, 669



Tibetan Buddhist monks at Dharamsala in India, gathered to hear the Dalai Lama teaching. After the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1951 and the suppression of the national uprising in Lhasa by Chinese troops in 1959, the Dalai Lama established a Tibetan 'government in exile' at Dharamsala.

Nuns offering devotion at a Buddhist shrine in Burma. Although the military government of Burma is not anti-Buddhist, it monitors Buddhist activities, and friction exists between monastic communities and the government.

Buddhists make up nearly 6 percent of the world's population. More than 98 percent live in South-East Asia, where new political freedoms in many countries have witnessed a growth of Buddhist practice and monasticism, particularly since the 1990s. In Cambodia, for example, only 3,000 monks were thought to have survived the civil war and its ensuing genocide. By 2006 the number of monks and pagodas had returned to pre-war levels of 1969–70. However, Buddhist activities are monitored or restricted in other countries, such as North Korea, China and Burma.

Outside Asia, there has been a considerable growth in Buddhism, with more than 3 million Buddhists in the USA, over 1.5 million in Europe and almost 700,000 in Latin America.

Within the three major traditions or branches of Buddhism there are hundreds of smaller organizations and groups, including the English Sangha Trust, with 10,000 supporters; the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, with 800,000 members, and Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, with 19.5 million members.

Branches of Buddhism

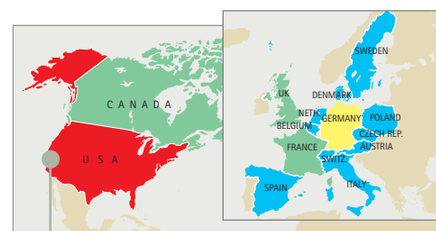
Areas of practice
2005

- Theravada Buddhism
- Mahayana Buddhism (Tibetan)
- Mahayana Buddhism (Chinese-Japanese)
- other areas

Buddhism outside Asia

Countries with 50 or more Buddhist centres
2006

- over 2,000
- 650
- 250 – 400
- 50 – 150
- other countries



There are over 2,100 Buddhist centres in the USA, including 342 in California and 131 in New York State.

ECUADOR

BRAZIL

AUSTRALIA

NEW ZEALAND

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