

Survey of Asian Americans shows wide diversity of faiths

By Cathy Lynn Grossman, USA TODAY July 19, 2012

The first comprehensive look at the religious lives of the nation's 18.2 million Asian Americans finds most are devoted to their faith traditions — but many are disconnected from any affiliation.



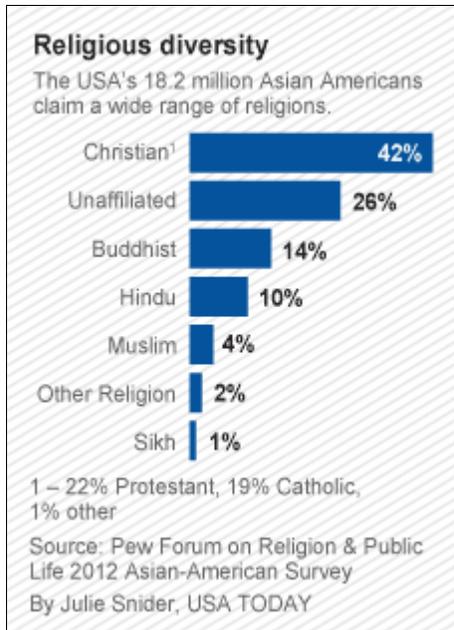
The Hindu Swaminarayan temple in Bartlett, Ill., is 22,400 square feet, with hand-carved Italian marble and Turkish limestone arches and gold-plated spires.

Asian Americans are "the fastest-growing race group, and they are bringing with them a diversity of faiths," says Cary Funk, senior researcher for Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, which released the report today. The survey of 3,511 adults, conducted in English and seven Asian languages, was large enough to establish data about the six largest groups: Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese.

Key findings:

- The greatest overall number (42%) are Christians, chiefly Protestant or [Roman Catholic](#). Fourteen percent are Buddhist, and 10% are Hindu. Twenty-six percent are unaffiliated.
- National origin makes a difference. Korean Americans may be politically conservative because 40% are evangelical Protestants. They come from a nation that holds many of the world's largest Protestant churches. Hindu Americans may be among the nation's wealthiest and most educated because about half of them come from India, the nation favored for special [U.S.](#) visas for scientists, engineers and other skilled workers.
- All but one group was dominated by a single religion — or lack of religion. Chinese Americans are overwhelmingly unaffiliated (52%), and Catholicism is dominant for Filipino Americans (65%). A majority of Indian Americans are Hindu (51%), and most Korean

Americans are Protestant (61%). Buddhists dominate among Vietnamese Americans (43%). Japanese Americans are more diverse: 33% Protestant, 32% unaffiliated and 25% Buddhist.



- The Christians are particularly devout: Three out of four Asian-American evangelical Protestants (76%) say they attend church weekly, compared with 64% of U.S. white evangelicals. They are also distinctly more likely to say their religion is the "one true faith" (72% vs. 49%).

- Buddhists and Hindus cling to traditions in largely Christian America: 67% of Buddhists say they believe in ancestral spirits; 78% of Hindus say they maintain a shrine in their home, and 95% say they celebrate Diwali, a Hindu festival of light.

- Like most Americans who mix traditions, the Asian-American survey finds 76% of Buddhists and 73% of Hindus also celebrate Christmas. Exactly how they mark it — as a secular celebration or as the birth of Jesus, the Christian savior — was not asked in the survey.

The new research complements a study on Asian Americans' socio-economic and political lives, drawn on the same survey and released in June by the Pew Research Center.

The earlier data detailed that Asians are by far the most educated, wealthy, family-oriented group in America.

The full religion report is at www.pewforum.org/asian-americans-A-Mosaic-of-Faiths.

The study from June is at www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans.