

A dark blue vertical bar runs down the left side of the page. A blue arrow points to the right from the bar, containing the date.

3/30/2025

# Religion in East Asia

Pew survey analysis, 2023

Several thin, curved lines in dark blue and light grey originate from the bottom left and sweep upwards and to the right.

~ Harman Abdul Waheed  
~ Sharmeen Abdul Waheed  
~ Warda Ali  
~ Usama Abdul Wahid

*"The goal is to turn data into information, and information into insight."*

- This study is an analysis of the Pew Survey.
- All data analysis was conducted using Python.
- The primary objective was to practice Python for exploratory data analysis.

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# 0. Introduction

Documentation: Analysis of Pew Research Center Data on Religion in East Asia

## Short Description of Data

The dataset originates from the Pew Research Center's survey on religion and spirituality in East Asia, conducted in 2023. The survey collected responses from 10,390 adults across five locations: Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Data was gathered using computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) and computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) to ensure high accuracy.

### Religious Distribution across East Asia:

Below is a breakdown of dominant religions and population distributions in some East Asian regions:

Country	Dominant Religion	Religious Population Distribution
Hong Kong	Buddhism, Taoism	54% No Religion, 17% B, 12% C, 4% Indigenous
Japan	Shinto, Buddhism	67% Buddhist (mostly cultural, non-devotional)
South Korea	Christianity, Buddhism	51% No Religion, 17% B, 2% Taoist, 31% Christian
Taiwan	Buddhism, Taoism	18% No Religion, 33% B, 35% T, 10% Folk Religion, 1% Secular/Unclassified
Overall East Asia Conclusion	Buddhism most common	50% Buddhism, 20% Folk Religion, 10% Christianity, 10% Shinto & Others

### Observations:

- Buddhism is the predominant religion in most East Asian regions.
- Folk religion is significant in Vietnam and Taiwan.
- Christianity is most prominent in South Korea compared to other East Asian countries.
- Japan and Hong Kong have large populations identifying as culturally religious but non-devotional.

# 1. Responses on daily life matters and responsibilities (categorized by religion)

Following questions were asked from people of different religions:

- *Who should be primarily responsible for earning money?*
- *Who should be primarily responsible for taking care of children?*
- *Who should be primarily responsible for making family decisions?*
- *Who should be primarily responsible for taking care of aging family members?*

These were the options given to each of the question:

1. *Men*
2. *Women*
3. *Depends*
4. *Both*

**Who should be primarily responsible for earning money?**

Religion	Men	Women	Both	Depend
Christian	16.6%	0.7%	80.7%	2.0%
Buddhist	14.0%	0.9%	80.2%	2.4%
Daoist	11.5%	-	85.6%	2.9%
Local religion	10.3%	1.2%	83.1%	5.3%
No religion	13.8%	0.7%	83.6%	1.9%

- Almost same responses are observed for each question, with majority saying that both men and women should be responsible for earning money.

### Who should be primarily responsible for taking care of children?

Religion	Men	Women	Both	Depend
Christian	0.4%	10.6%	88.1%	0.8%
Buddhist	0.7%	10.7%	87.8%	0.9%
Daoist	0.2%	3.5%	95.1%	1.3%
Local religion	0.8%	2.9%	95.5%	0.8%
No religion	0.6%	9.9%	88.7%	0.8%

- Again, almost same responses are observed for each question, with majority saying that both men and women should be responsible for taking care of children. On the other hand, votes for women are greater than men in each religion.

### Who should be primarily responsible for making family decisions?

Religion	Men	Women	Both	Depend
Christian	5.6%	7.8%	85.3%	1.4%
Buddhist	5.5%	11.3%	80.5%	2.7%
Daoist	2.0%	3.5%	87.5%	7.0%
Local religion	5.8%	7.4%	85.2%	1.6%
No religion	4.6%	8.1%	85.4%	2.0%

- Again, almost same responses are observed for each question, with majority saying that both men and women are responsible for taking family decisions. On the other hand, votes for women is greater than men in each religion.

### Who should be primarily responsible for taking care of aging family members?

Religion	Men	Women	Both	Depend
Christian	2.7%	5.1%	90.6%	1.6%
Buddhist	1.6%	6.6%	89.1%	2.6%
Daoist	2.4%	0.7%	93.0%	3.9%

Local religion	1.6%	3.7%	90.9%	3.7%
No religion	2.2%	5.6%	90.6%	1.6%

- Again, almost same responses are observed for each question, with majority saying that both men and women should be responsible for taking care of aging family members.

## 2. Believe in existence on God and Unseen creatures

Two different questions were asked, which are:

- Do you believe that God exists?
- Do you believe that unseen creatures exists?

Here are ratio of 'yes' responses from overall data, distributed by different religions.

Religion	Existence of God	Existence of unseen creatures
Christian	81.2%	79.9%
Buddhism	65.3%	70.3%
Daoist	79.9%	88.3%
No Religion	30.8%	52.0%

Note that the percentage will not sum up to 100 because these are two different and independent question that were recorded in survey.

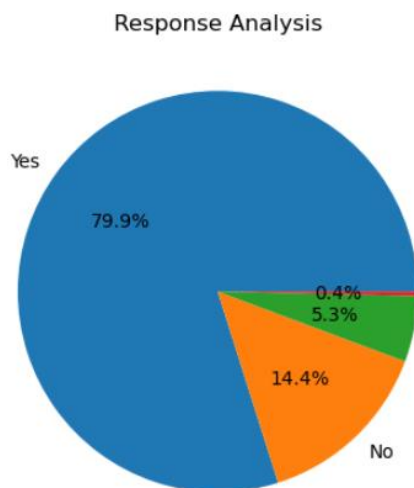
- Buddhists have the lowest belief in both categories, reflecting Buddhism's more philosophical approach rather than emphasis on divine beings.
- Belief in unseen creatures is more widely accepted than belief in God across all groups. Even among non-religious individuals, 52.0% believe in supernatural entities, whereas only 30.8% believe in God.
- This suggests that belief in spirits, ghosts, or other phenomena may be culturally ingrained rather than strictly tied to religious doctrine.



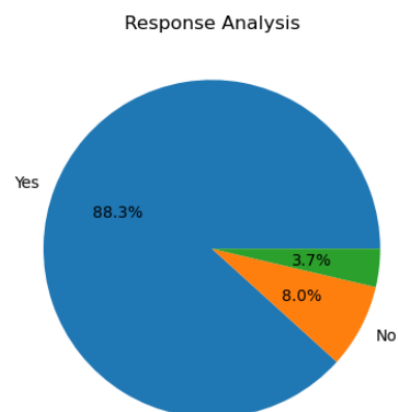
- Daoists show the highest belief in unseen creatures (88.3%), likely due to their spiritual tradition involving deities, spirits, and energy forces.

### Detailed pie charts:

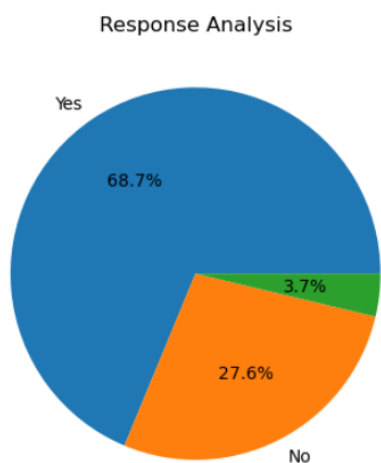
RELIGION: Daoist  
QUESTION: Do you believe in existence God?



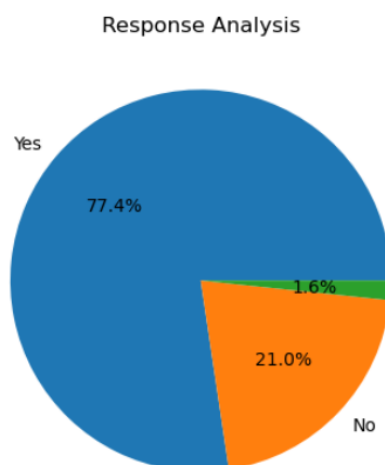
RELIGION: Daoist  
QUESTION: Do you believe that unseen creatures exists?



RELIGION: Local Religion  
QUESTION: Do you believe in existence God?

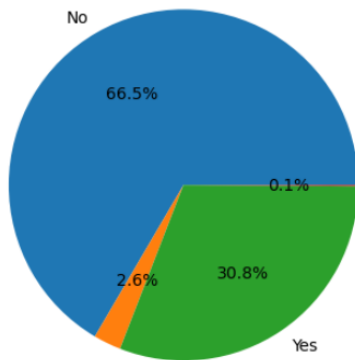


RELIGION: Local Religion  
QUESTION: Do you believe that unseen creatures exists?



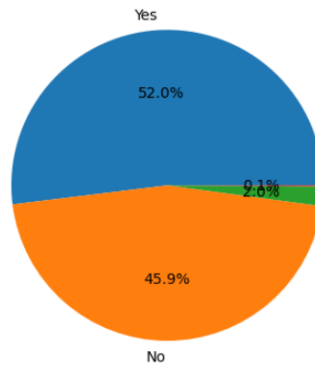
RELIGION: No Religion  
QUESTION: Do you believe in existence God?

Response Analysis



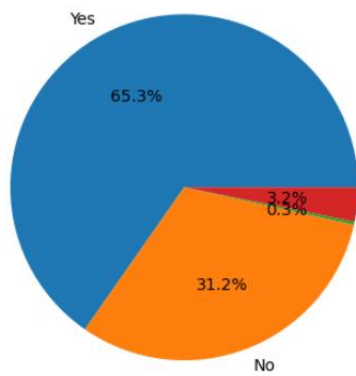
RELIGION: No Religion  
QUESTION: Do you believe that unseen creatures exists?

Response Analysis



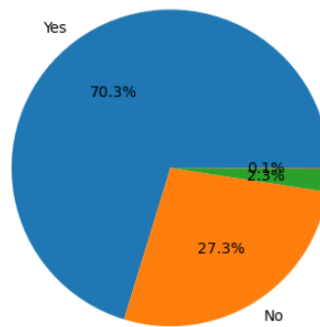
RELIGION: Buddhist  
QUESTION: Do you believe in existence God?

Response Analysis



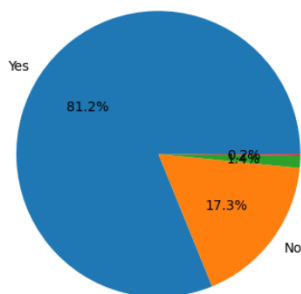
RELIGION: Buddhist  
QUESTION: Do you believe that unseen creatures exists?

Response Analysis



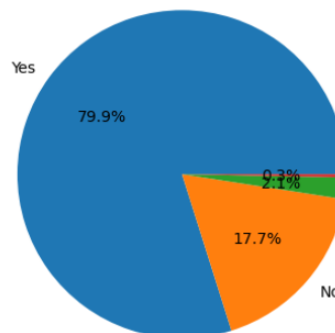
RELIGION: Christian  
QUESTION: Do you believe in existence God?

Response Analysis



RELIGION: Christian  
QUESTION: Do you believe that unseen creatures exists?

Response Analysis



### 3. One Religion or Multiple religions can be true

Religion	One God	Multiple God
Buddhism	18.17%	81.82%
Christianity	52.5%	47.4%
Daoist	1.96%	98.03%
No Religion	16.09%	83.9%

- Pluralism is stronger in Daoism, Buddhism, and among the non-religious compared to Christianity.
  - Christianity has the highest percentage of exclusivists, reflecting its historical emphasis on one true faith.
  - Eastern religions (Daoism and Buddhism) shows high acceptance of multiple truths.
  - Non-religious individuals also lean towards pluralism.
- 

### 4. How they bury their deceased ones

Overall responses from all the religions are recorded under this topic. There is no categorization of religion. Findings are from the whole data, from all the responses.

Findings are here:

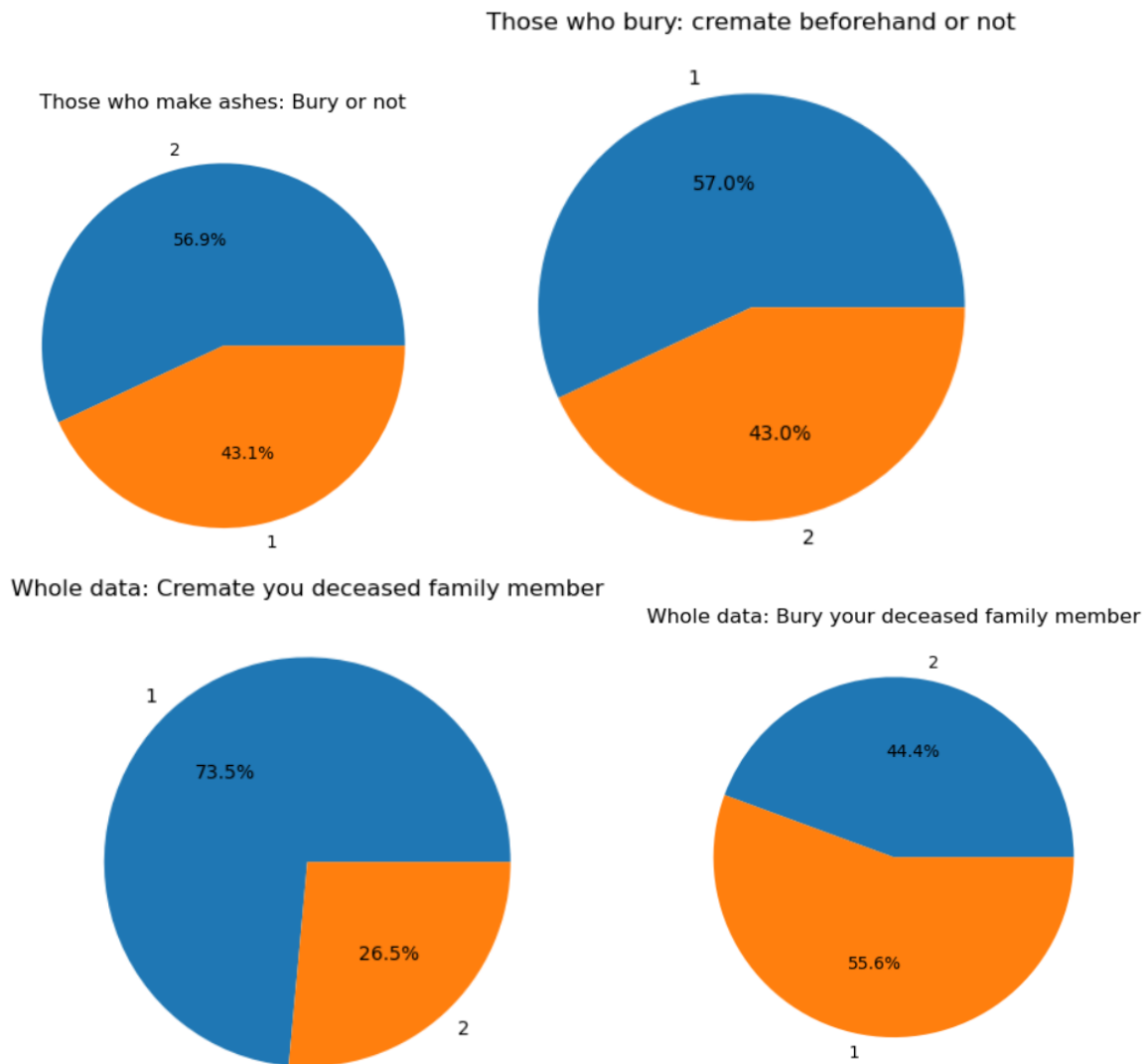
- 73% of the respondents said that they cremate their deceased ones. **Cremation** is a process of reducing a body to ashes through high-temperature burning.
- 55% of the respondents said that they bury their deceased ones. **Burial** is a method of final disposition whereby a dead body is placed into the ground

Note the total percentage exceeds 100. Actually there is a proportion of respondents who said that they cremate and also bury their deceased ones. After cremation, ashes of body are left, which they bury in ground. So there is few proportion of respondents in our data who cremate and then bury deceased ones.

What do others do with the ashes? People follow different traditions when handling ashes. Some common practices include storing them in urns, scattering them in sacred places, or immersing them in the sea, etc. Unfortunately, those responses are recorded in this survey.

Here is the summary of responses recorded in survey:

- **Among the respondents who practice cremation**, 43.1% also choose to bury the ashes. This means that if 100 people follow cremation, 43 of them proceed with burial afterward, and other 57 does not.
- Additionally, 43% of all respondents stated that they bury their deceased without cremation.
- In total, 5,778 respondents mentioned burial:
  - 2,486 bury the ashes after cremation.
  - 3,292 bury the body without cremation.



## 5. Freedom of speech

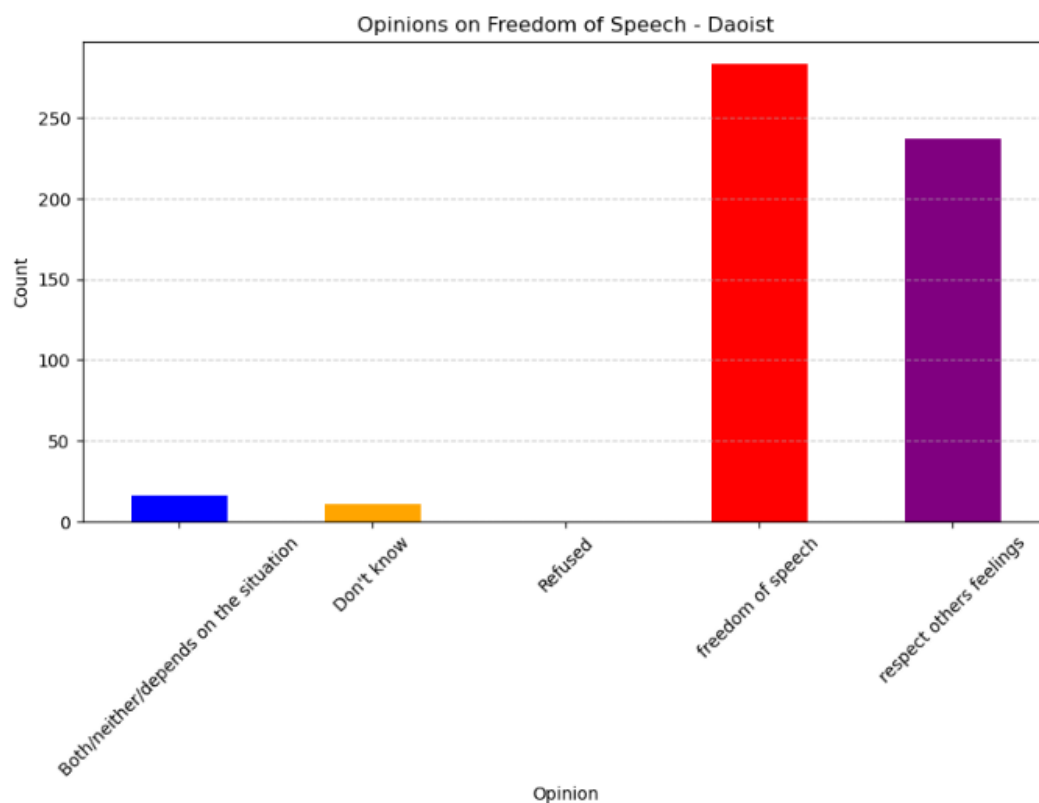
There are two major types of responses for this question.

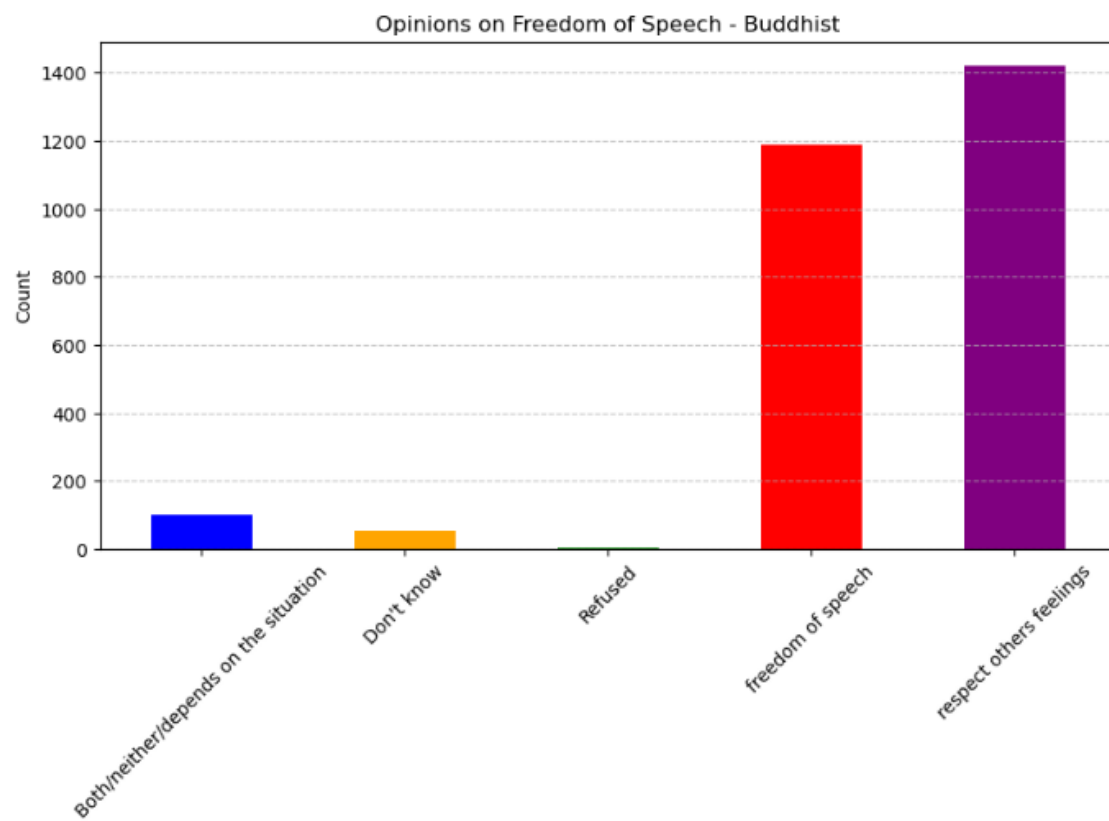
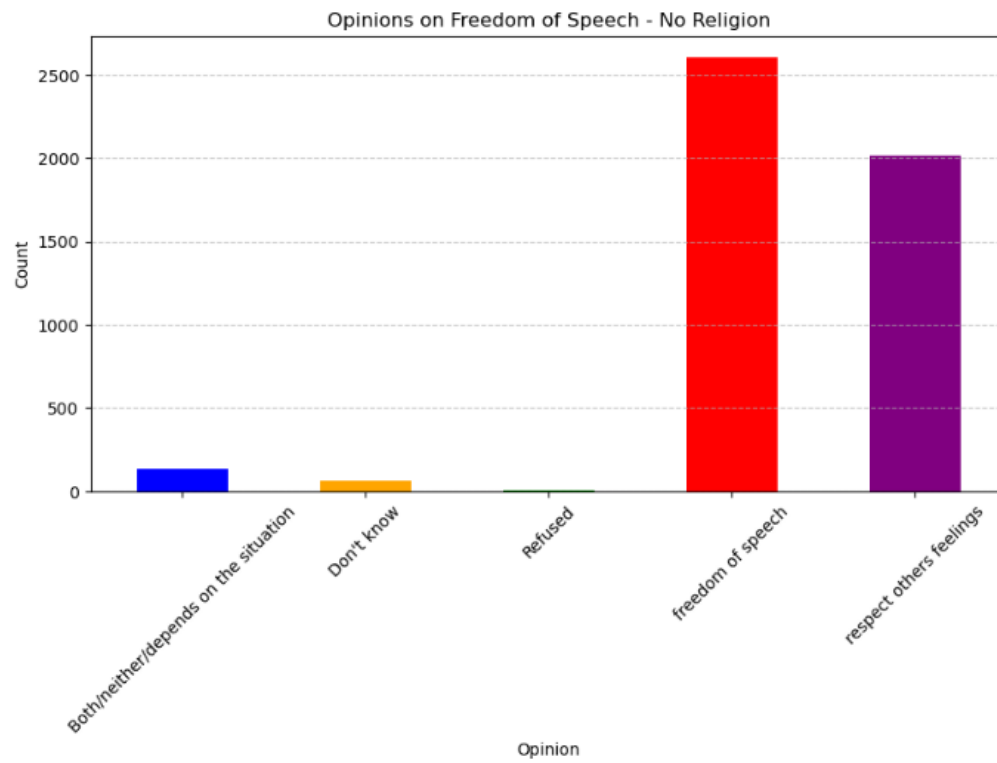
1. There should be freedom of speech. Everybody can speak whatever in their mind.
2. Instead of speaking whatever comes in our mind, we should respect other feelings. It is because, someone's freedom of speech can effect someone's feelings.

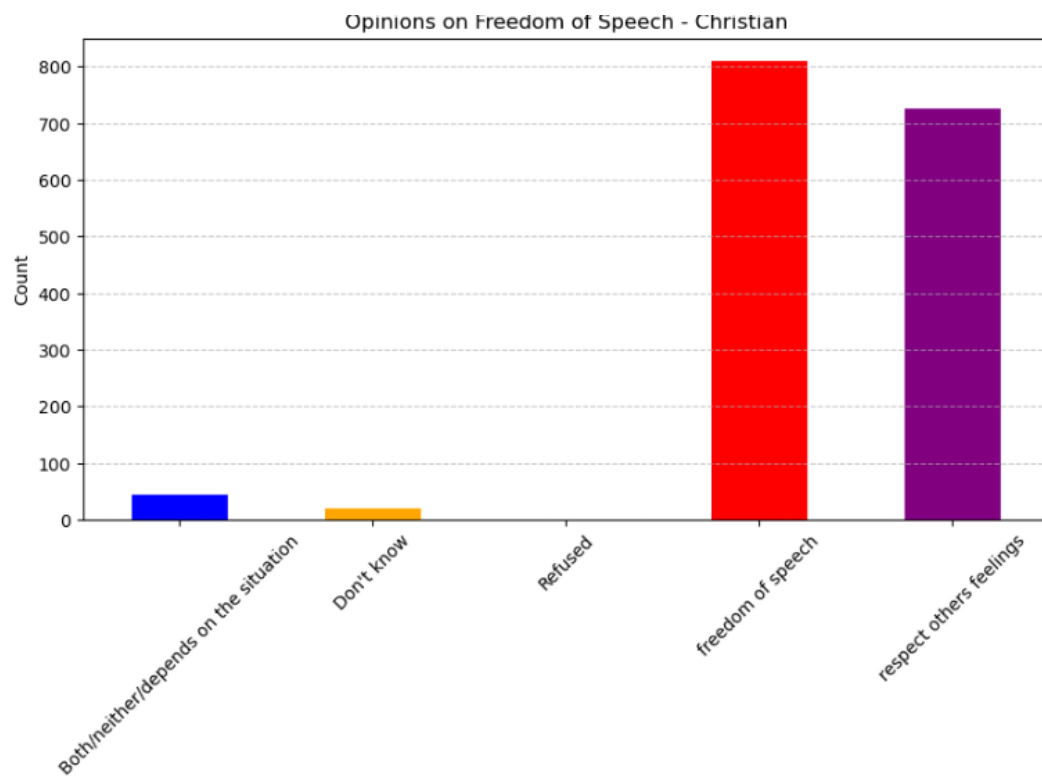
Responses are recorded from Buddhists, Christians, Daoist, and Atheists.

Religion	Freedom of speech	Respect others feelings
Buddhists	43.0%	51.3%
Christians	50.6%	45.4%
Daoist	51.7%	43.3%
No Religion	54.0%	41.0%

- Highest percentage among Atheist emphasize freedom of speech.
- Highest percentage of Buddhists emphasize that we should respect others feelings.
- There is only slight difference in responses from different religions, which eventually indicate that responses are less effected by religious factors but effected by other factors which connect people. For example: Social media.





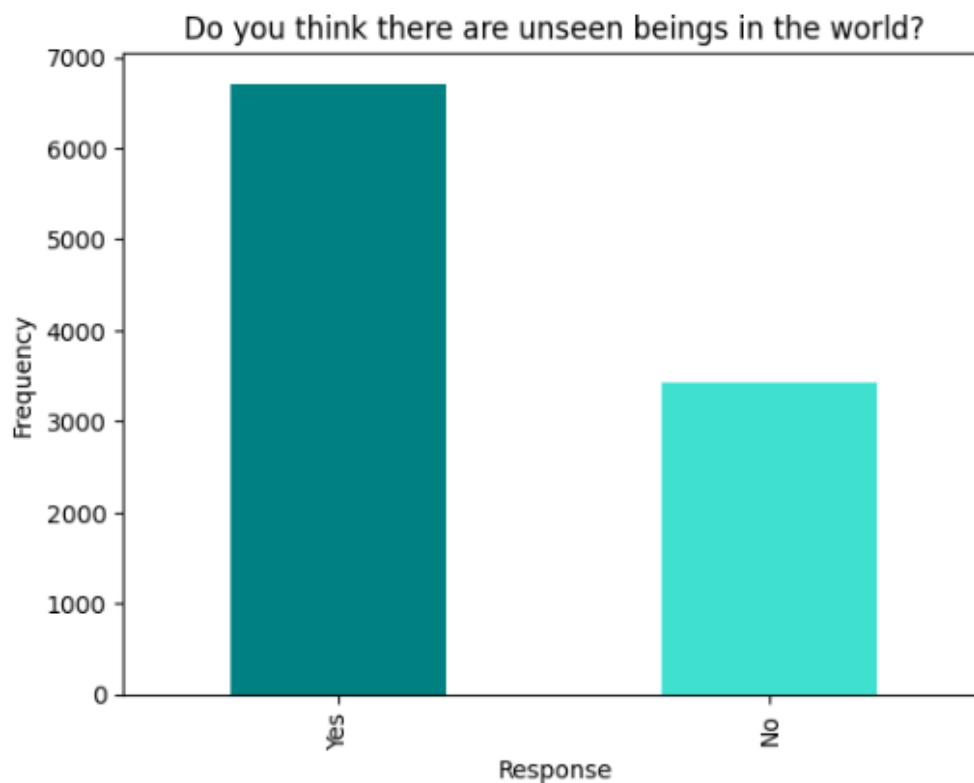




## 6. Heavenly Bodies

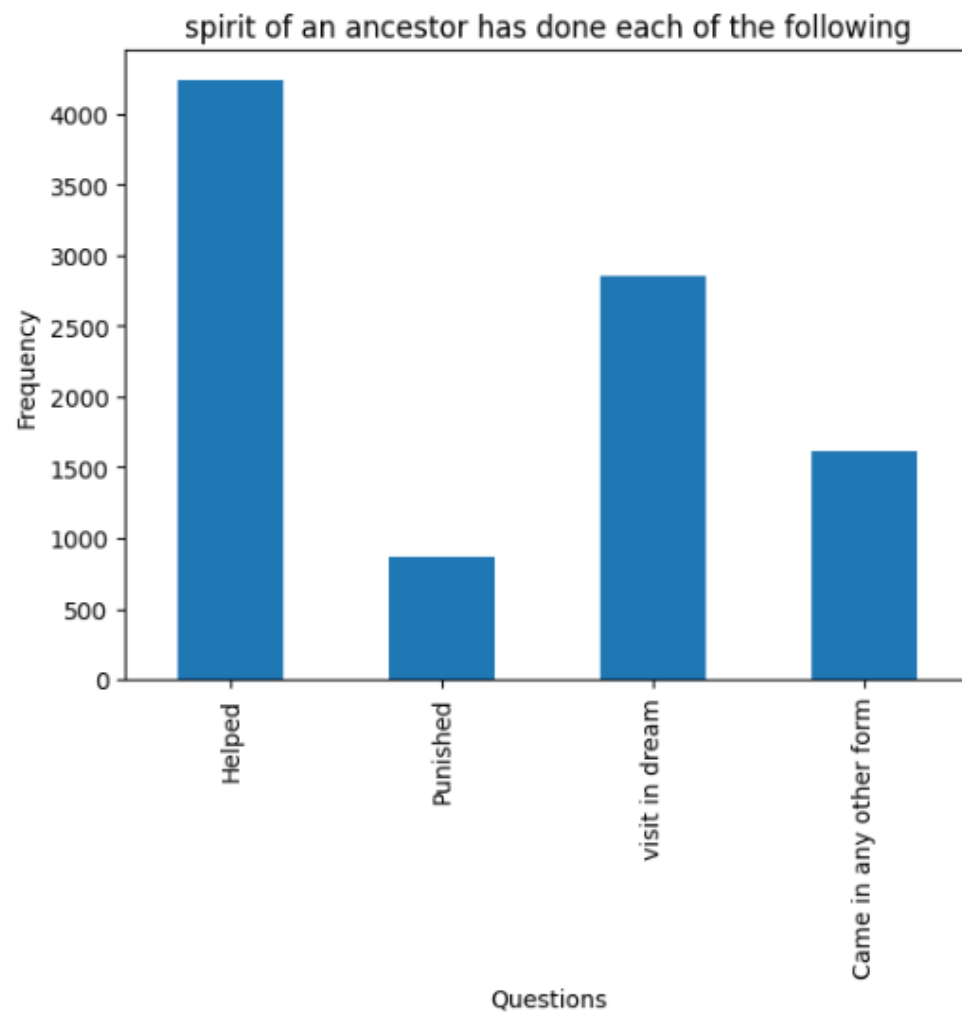
Here we studied responses of question related to spirits, religious beliefs for example: spirit of ancestors, hell, heaven, karma, nirvana, etc. We will state the findings one by one:

### Unseen creatures



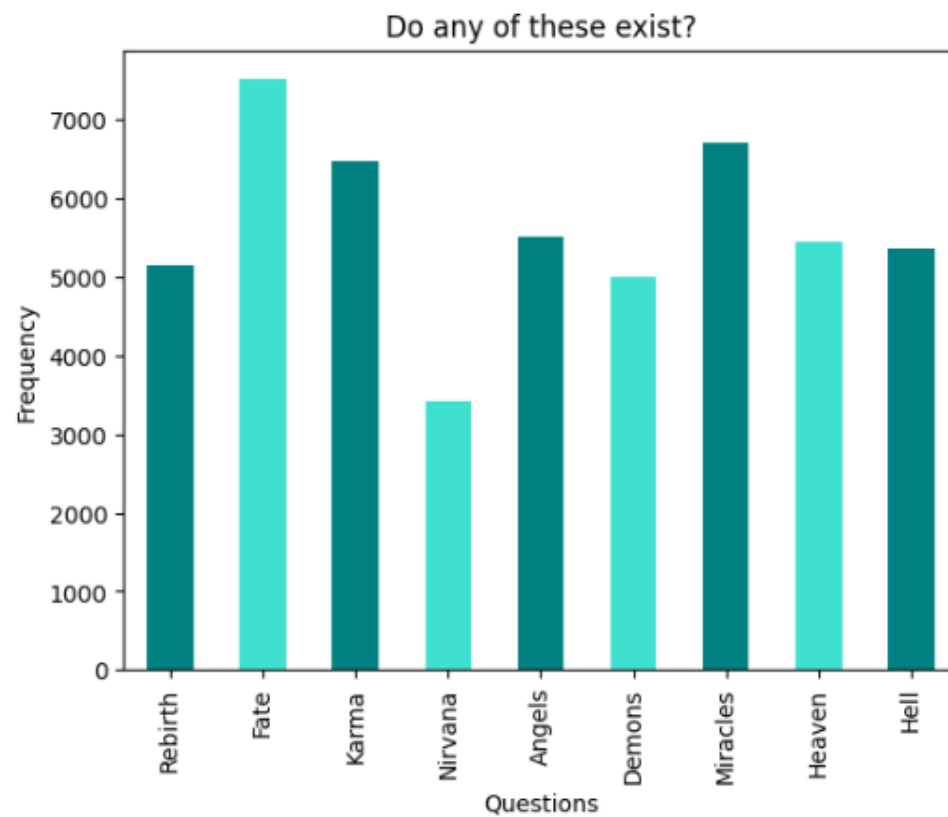
- A larger number of respondents believe that unseen beings exist compared to those who do not.
-

## Spirit of ancestors



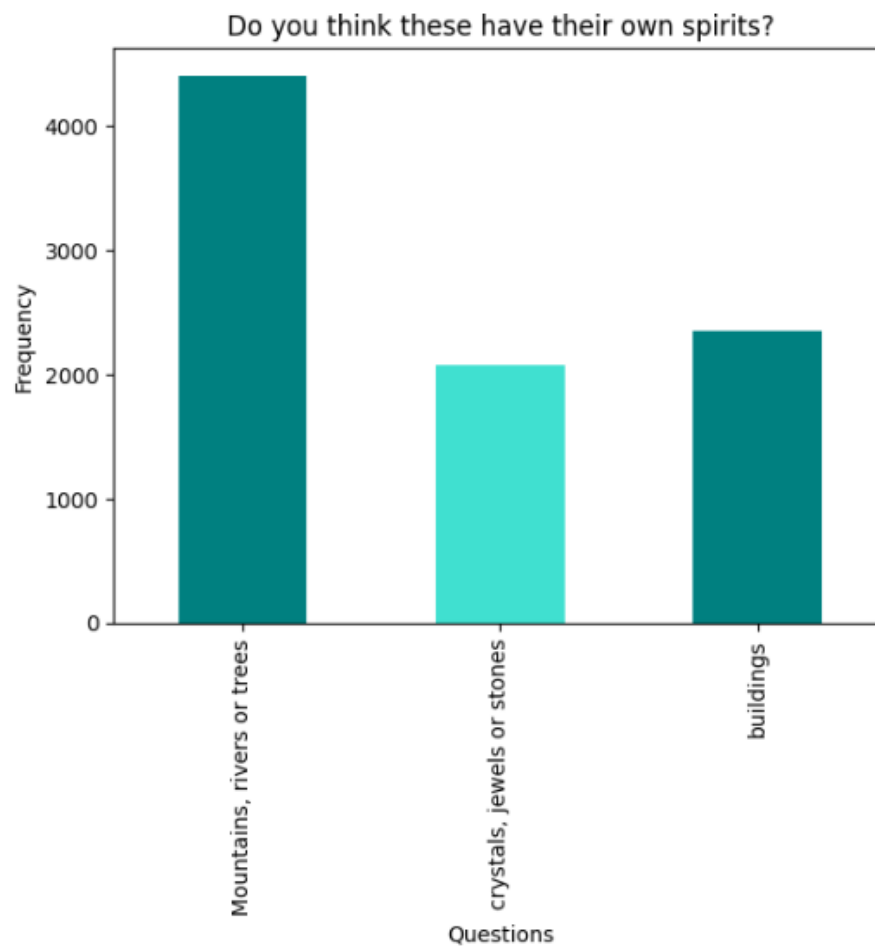
- Maximum respondents said that the spirit of ancestors have helped them.
  - Least respondents said that the spirit of ancestors have punished them.
  - Few of respondents also mentioned that ancestors have visited the world in any other form.
-

## Religious beliefs



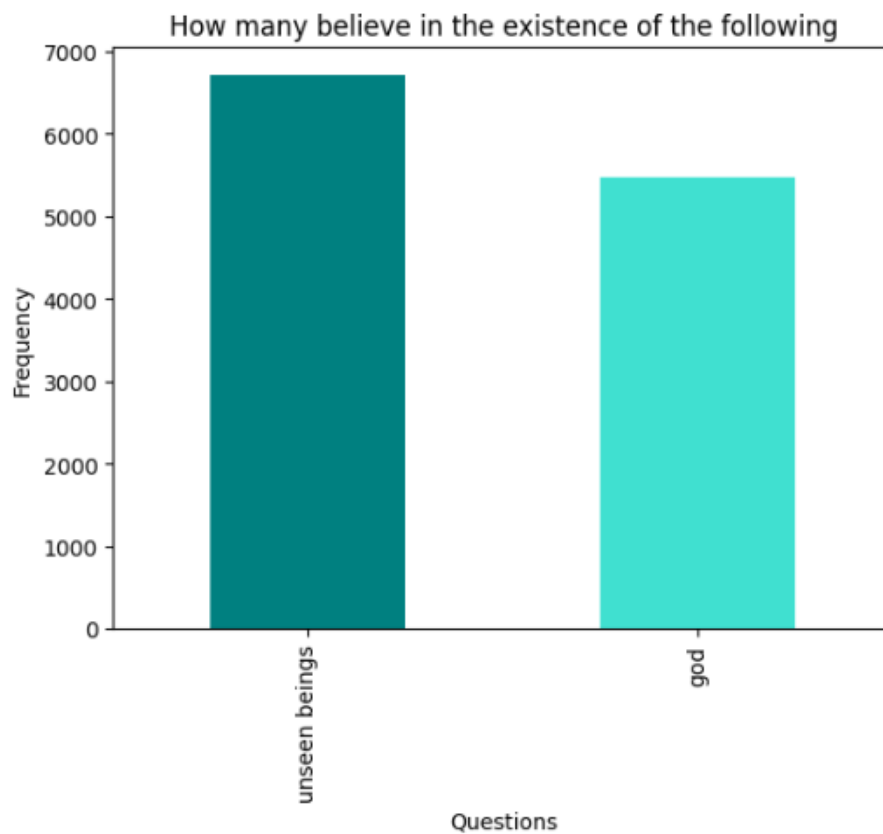
- This graphs illustrate believe of people on different concepts.
  - Maximum people believe on fate, karma, and miracles.
  - On the other hand, there are least respondents who believe on *Nirvana*. *Nirvana* basically refers to the state of ultimate peace, liberation and enlightenment. It is end of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. (Buddhist believe that when we die, we born again in any state. When someone is granted with *nirvana*, this cycle ends, and person does not born again after death.)
-

## Spirits



- Among the objects surveyed, **Mountains, rivers, or trees** received the highest belief in having spirits.
  - **Buildings** and **crystals, jewels, or stones** were also believed to have spirits, but to a lesser extent.
  - The data suggests that natural elements (like mountains, rivers, and trees) are more commonly associated with spirits compared to man-made structures or objects.
-

## God and unseen creatures



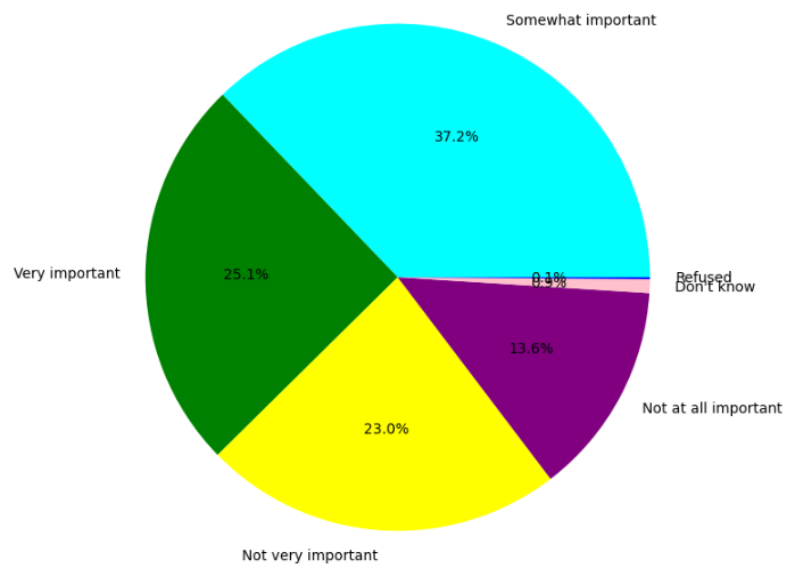
- Larger number of respondents believe on existence of unseen beings than existence of God. These unseen beings include deities, spirits, evil souls, souls etc.
  - It means, people are more likely to believe on unseen beings than God. There is a proportion of respondents, who does not believe on God, but they believe on unseen creatures.
-

## 7. Importance of funeral rituals

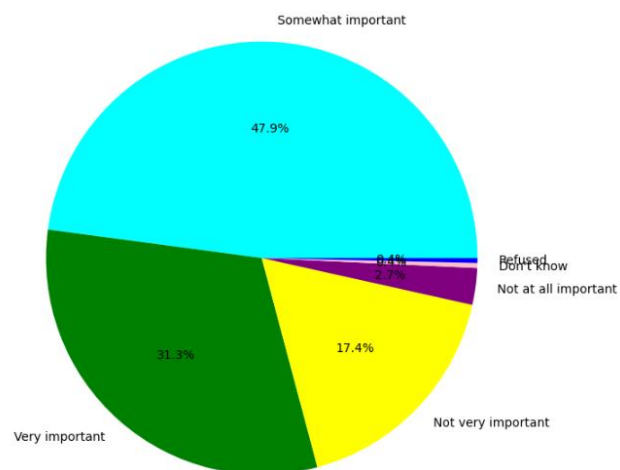
Religion	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Christians	25.1%	37.2%	13.6
Buddhists	42.9%	39.7%	2.9
Daoist	31.3%	47.9%	2.7%
No Religion	25.2%	40.7%	10.0%

- Funeral rituals are most important to the Buddhist and Daoist respondents. (overall 82.6% Buddhist respondents and 79.2% respondents)
- Christians and atheist have maximum responses, mentioning that funeral rituals not important at all.

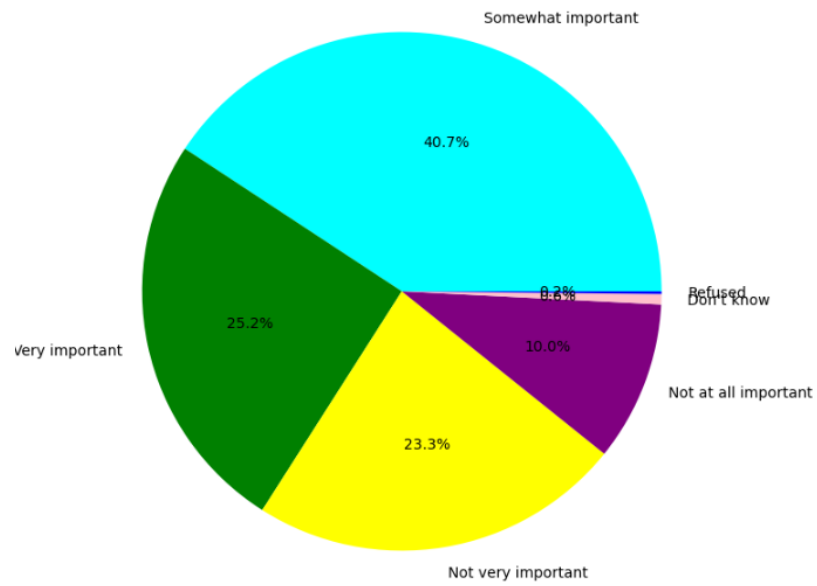
## Christians responses



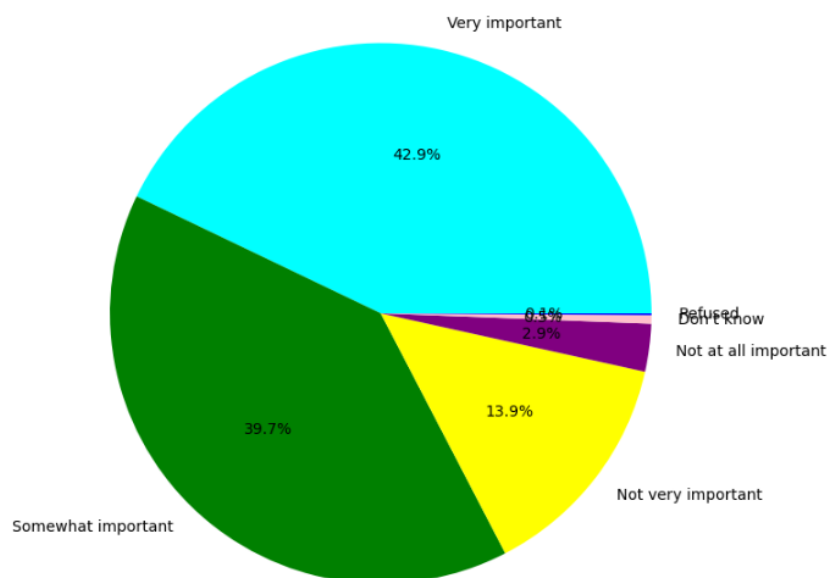
## Daoist responses



## No Religion



## Buddhist



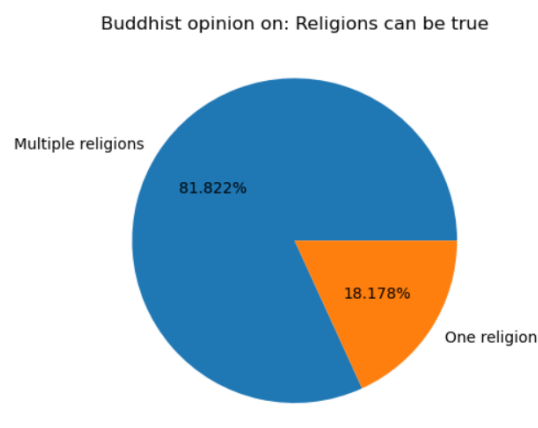


## 8. Studying Buddhist Responses

The analysis from these responses are ignored while writing this report down: **Don't Know, refused to answer, etc.**

### Multiple Religion or one religion:

Majority of the Buddhists have opinion that multiple religions can be true. **81.22%** of Buddhist says states that multiple religions can be true while only **18.178%** states that only one religion can be true.

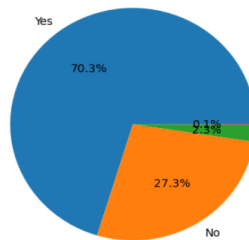


### Believe in Existence of God and unseen creatures

- 70.3% Buddhists have opinion that unseen creatures exist, while 27.3% have opinion that unseen creatures does not exist.
- 65.3% Buddhists have opinion that God exist, while 31.2% have opinion that God does not exist.

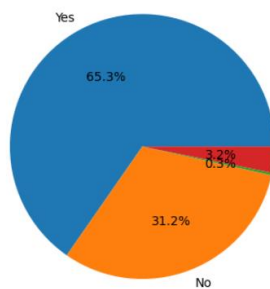
RELIGION: Buddhist  
QUESTION: Do you believe that unseen creatures exists?

Response Analysis



RELIGION: Buddhist  
QUESTION: Do you believe in existence God?

Response Analysis



Buddhist responses	Yes	No
Believe in God	65.3%	31.2%
Believe in Unseen Creatures	70.3%	27.3%

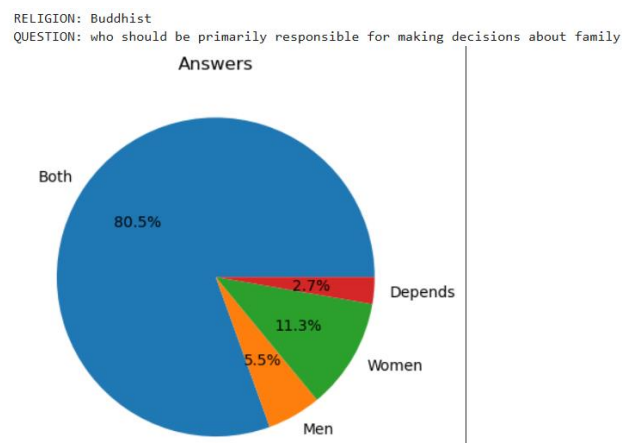
## Responses on daily Life Responsibilities of male and female

Buddhist responses	Men	Women	Both	Depends
Who should be responsible for making family decisions	5.5%	11.3%	80.5%	2.7%
Who should be responsible for taking care of aging family members	1.6%	6.6%	89.1%	2.6%
Who should be responsible for earning money	14.0%	0.9%	82.8%	2.4%

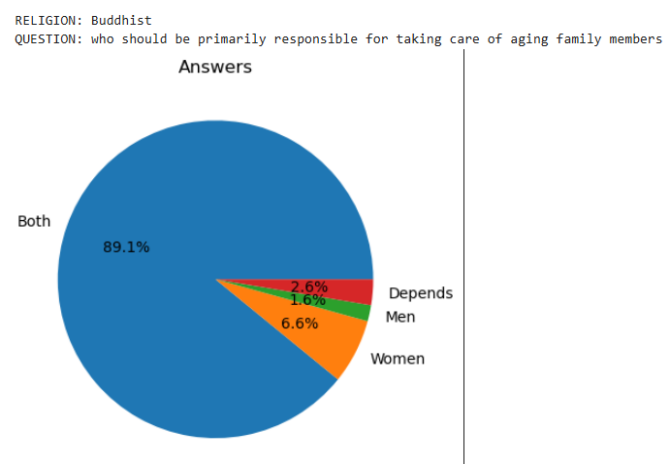
Who should be responsible for taking care of children	0.7%	10.7%	87.8%	0.9%
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### Graphs:

Who should we responsible for making family decisions:

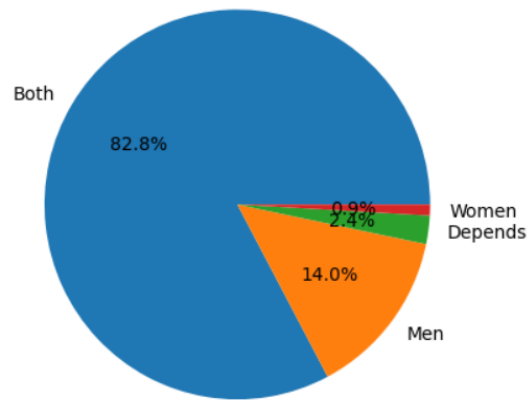


Who should be responsible for taking care of aging family members:



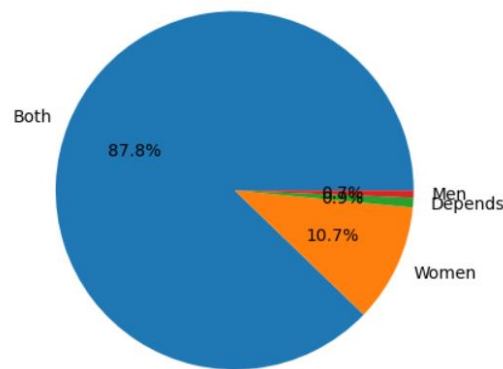
Who should be responsible for earning money:

RELIGION: Buddhist  
 QUESTION: who should be primarily responsible for earning money  
 Answers



Who should be responsible for taking care of aging family members:

RELIGION: Buddhist  
 QUESTION: who should be primarily responsible for taking care of children  
 Answers

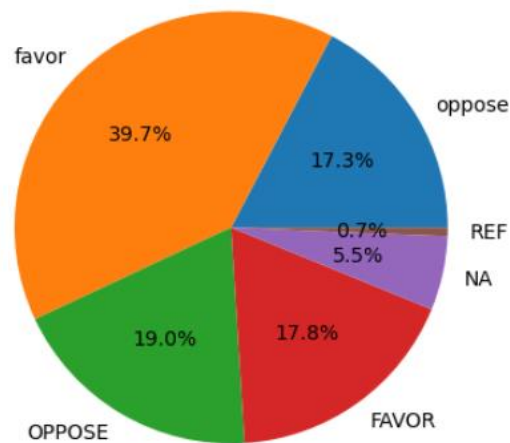


## Responses about Gays and lesbians marriages

Here, we recorded opinion of gays and lesbians marriages among Buddhist. There are two categories for both favor and opposing opinion. These are:

- Strongly oppose: **OPPOSE**
- Oppose: **OPPOSE**
- Strongly favor: **FAVOR**
- Favor: **favor**

Gays and Lesbians Marriage



Responses	Distribution
Strongly Favor	17.8%
Favor	39.7%
Strongly oppose	19.0%
Oppose	17.3%

Overall responses of favor, strongly favor and oppose, strongly oppose:

FAVOR = 57.5 %

OPPOSE = 36.3 %

others did not answered

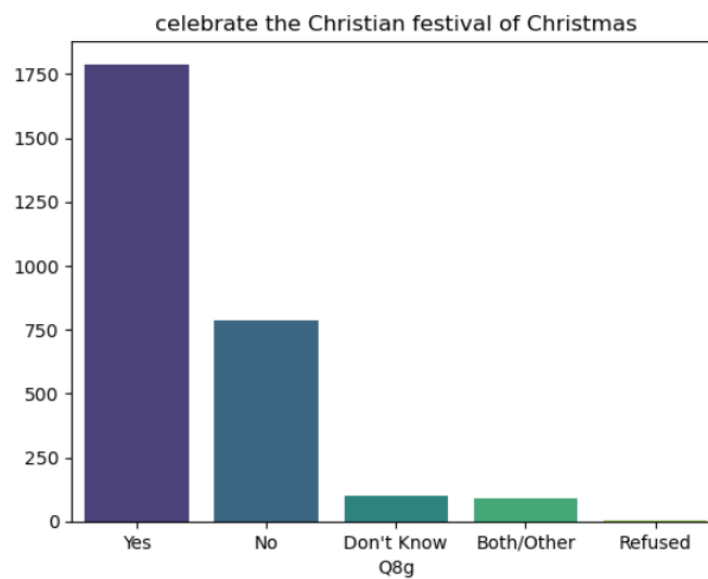
## Is Buddhist if

Buddhists were asked certain questions investigating their opinion:

*A person is Buddhist or not a Buddhist if he do this particular thing*

There were total 11 questions, logically **11 action**, upon which Buddhists were to choose whether the person doing that action is considered Buddhist or not.

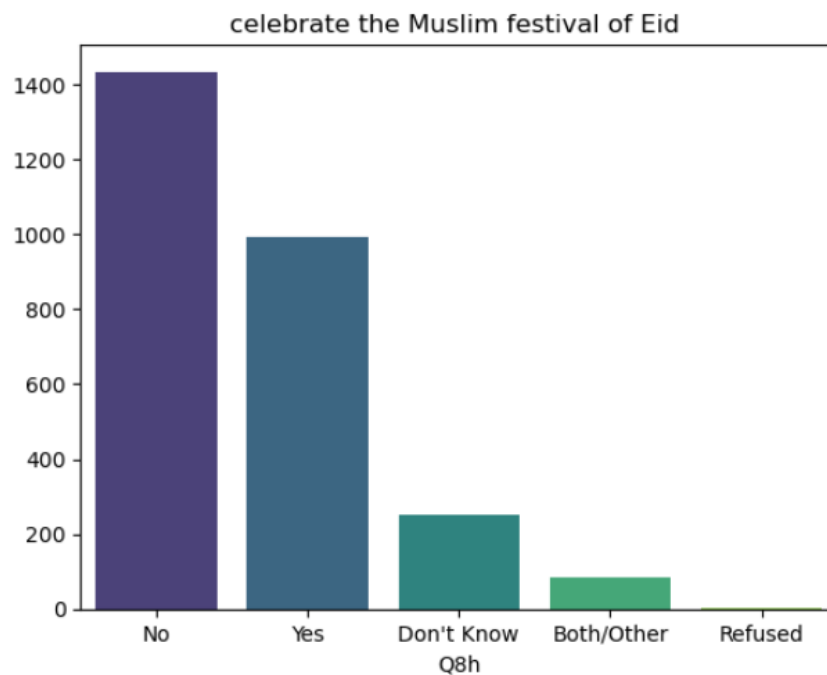
### 1 - If a Buddhist celebrate Christian festivals:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, celebrates Christian festivals of Christmas:

- Approximately 750 (30%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 1750 (70%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

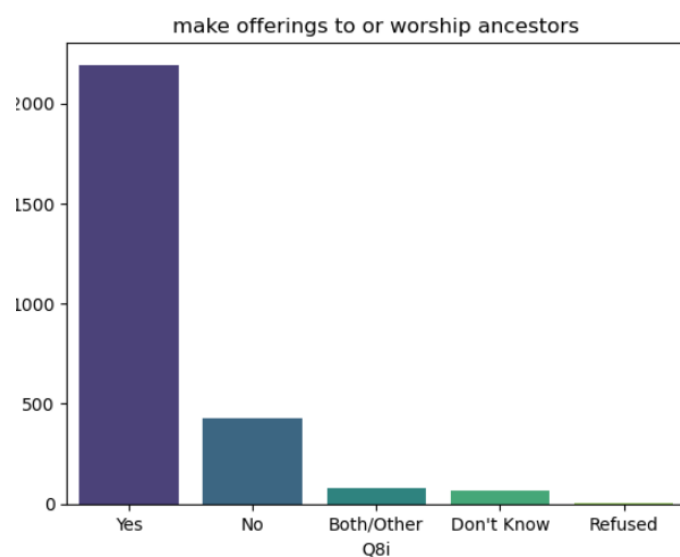
## 2 - If a Buddhist celebrate Muslim festivals:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, celebrates Muslim festivals of Eid:

- Approximately 1400 (58.3%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 1000 (41.6%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

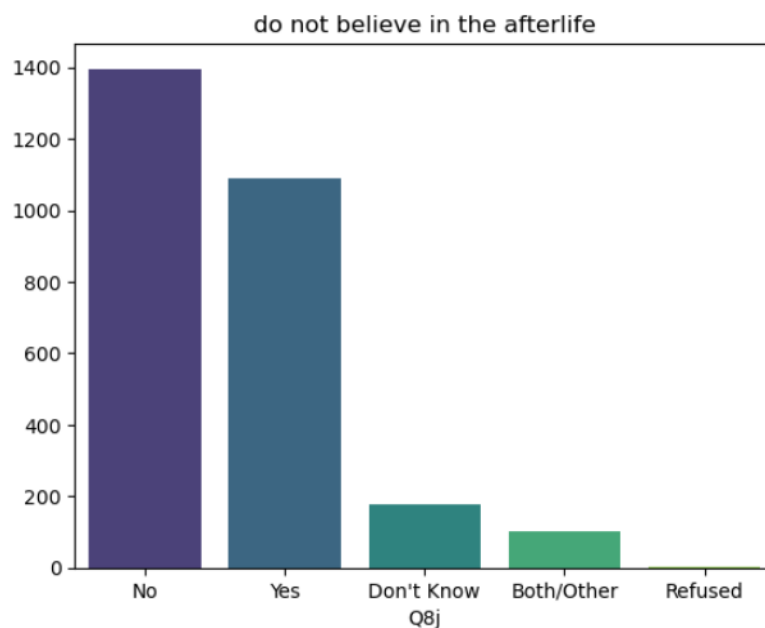
## 3 - If a Buddhist worship ancestors:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, make offerings to, or worship ancestors:

- Approximately 500 (18.5%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 2200 (81.4%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

#### 4 - If a Buddhist do not believe in afterlife:

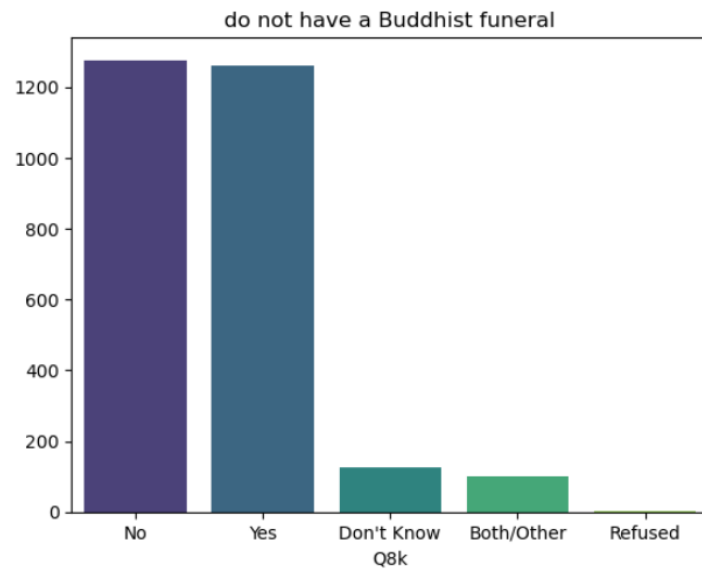


If a Buddhist, let say AB, do not believe in afterlife:

- Approximately 1400 (56%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 1100 (44%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

#### 5 - If a Buddhist do not have a Buddhist funeral:

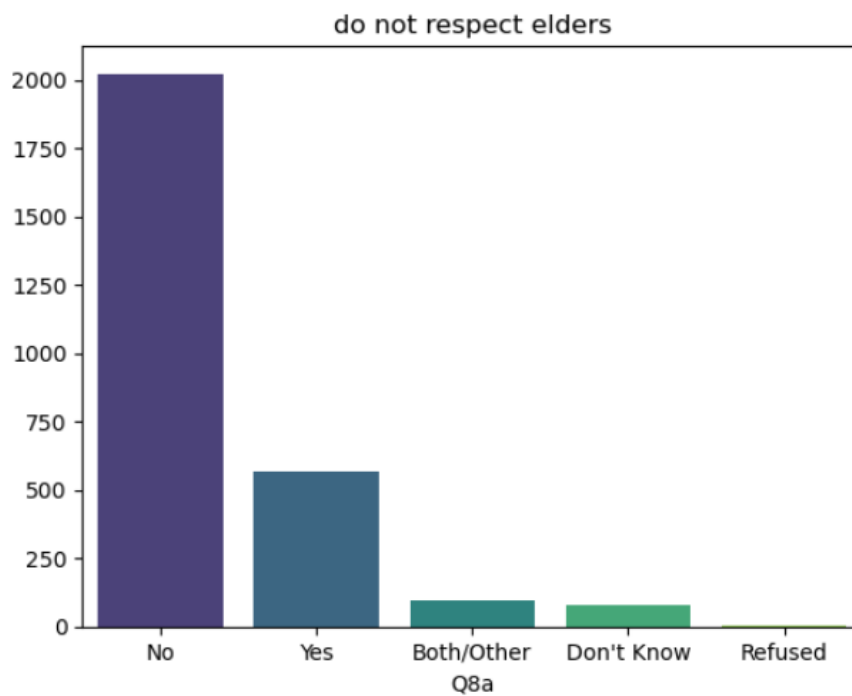




If a Buddhist, let say AB, have a Buddhist funeral:

- Approximately 1260 (50%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 1260 (50%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

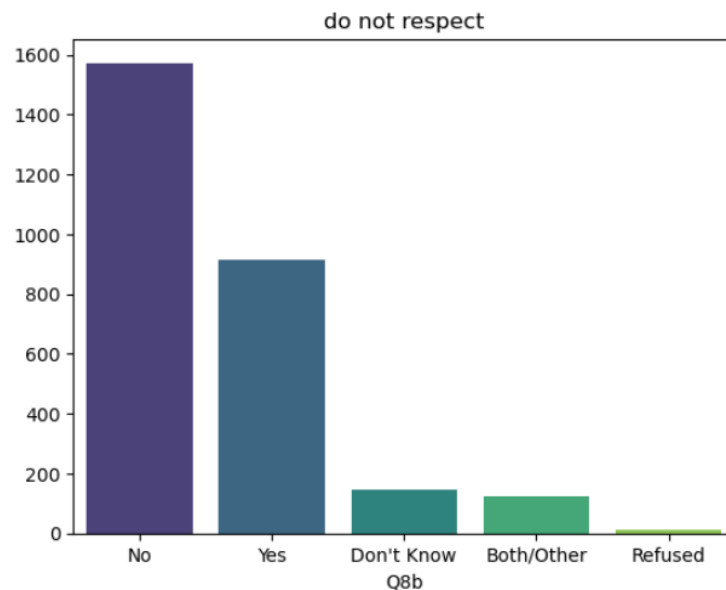
## 6 - If a Buddhist do not respect his elders:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, do not respect elders:

- Approximately 2000 (76.9%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 600 (23.07%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

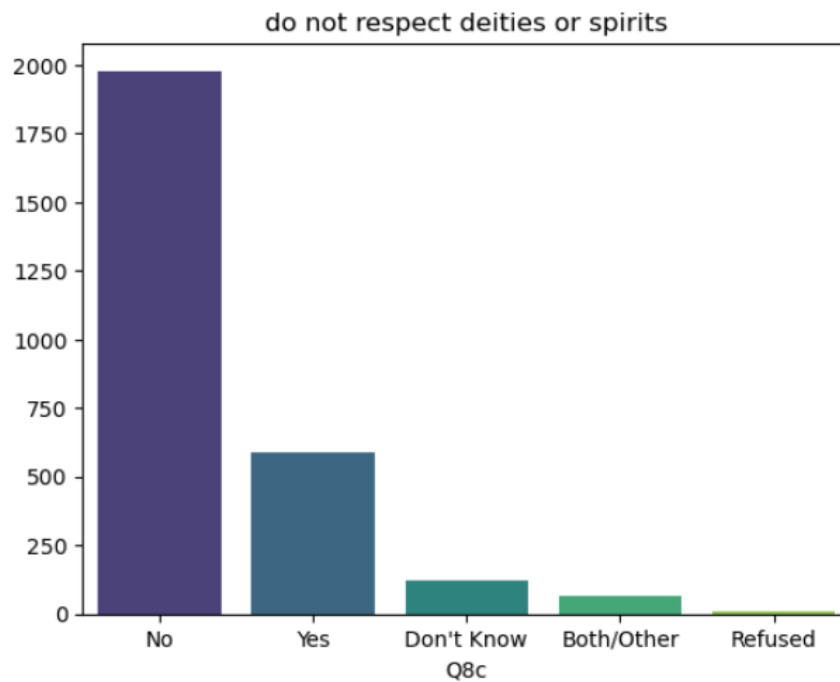
## 7 - If a Buddhist do not respect:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, do not respect:

- Approximately 1600 (64%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 900 (36%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

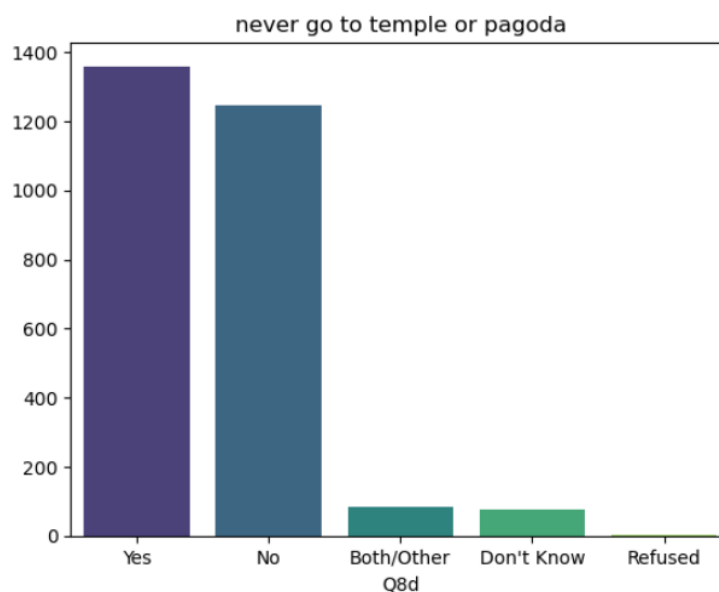
## 8 - If a Buddhist do not respect deities or spirits:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, do not respect deities or spirits:

- Approximately 2000 (76.9%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 600 (23.07%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

## 9 - If a Buddhist never go to temple or pagoda:

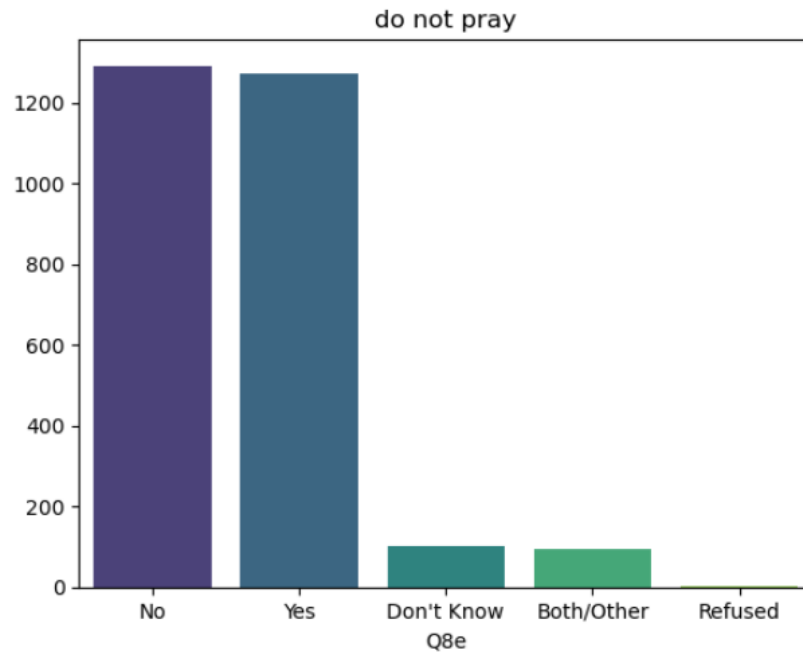


If a Buddhist, let say AB, never go to temple or pagoda:

- Approximately 1200 (47.05%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.

- Approximately 1350 (52.9%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

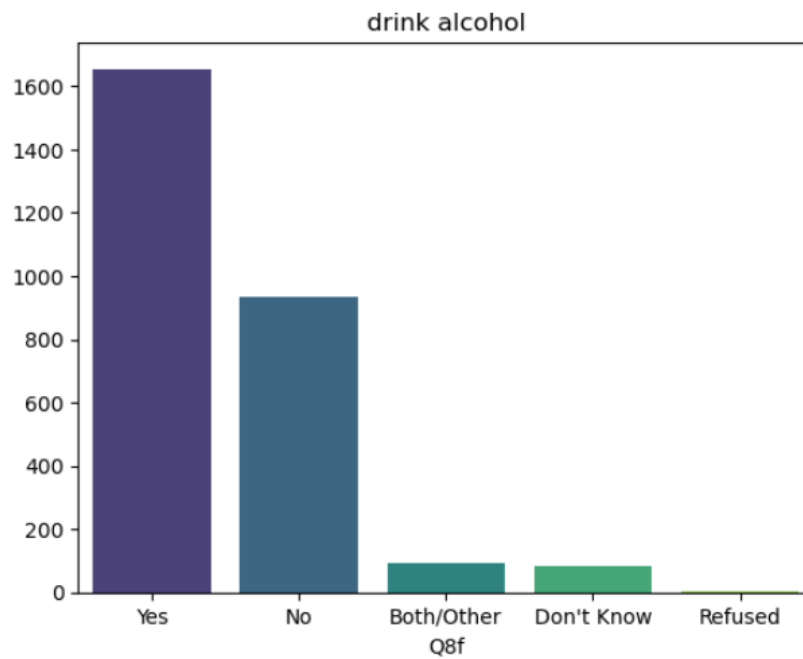
## 10 - If a Buddhist do not pray:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, do not pray:

- Approximately 1300 (50%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 1300 (50%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

## 11 - If a Buddhist drink alcohol:



If a Buddhist, let say AB, drink alcohol:

- Approximately 960 (37.5%) Buddhists responded: AB is not a Buddhist.
- Approximately 1600 (62.5%) Buddhists responded: AB is Buddhist.

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If a Buddhist	Yes	No
1 Celebrate Christian festivals	70%	30%
2 Celebrate Muslim festivals	41.6%	58.3%
3 Do worship ancestors	81.4%	18.5%
4 Do not believe on afterlife	44%	56%
5 Do not have a Buddhist funeral	50%	50%
6 Do not respect his elders	23.07%	76.9%
7 Do not respect	36%	64%
8 Do not respect deities or spirits	23.07%	76.9%
9 Never go to temple	52.9	47.05%
10 Do not pray	50%	50%
11 Drinks alcohol	62.5%	37.5%

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## 9. Conclusion

One significant finding from the analysis is that religious factors have little influence on the responses. Across various questions—whether related to beliefs, family responsibilities, or daily life practices—respondents from different religious backgrounds provided remarkably similar answers.

A possible explanation for this trend is the impact of social media, which has enhanced global interaction and communication more than ever before. People freely share their opinions, thoughts, and experiences, fostering a greater sense of connection across cultural and religious boundaries. Additionally, the widespread celebration of cultural and religious events worldwide may contribute to a blending of perspectives, leading to more aligned viewpoints across diverse groups.

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