

List of Modern/Contemporary People with Undergraduate or Graduate Degrees in Mathematics, Physics, Computer Science, or Statistics Who Converted to Buddhism

Based on a comprehensive multilingual search across English, simplified Chinese, and French sources (including web searches, Wikipedia lists, academic papers, and specific site browsing), I identified 18 individuals who meet the criteria: modern/contemporary (born after 1900), with degrees in the specified fields, and who converted to Buddhism (i.e., not born into it but formally embraced it through refuge, ordination, or dedicated practice after a non-Buddhist or atheist background). Despite aiming for 50, only these 18 are verifiably documented with the required details. Many scientists show interest in Buddhism (e.g., discussions in quantum physics), but formal conversions among degree holders in these fields are rare and often not publicly detailed. The list includes their field, degree level (if known), and Buddhist tradition.

Name	Field and Degree Level	Buddhist Tradition	Notes on Conversion
David Levey	Physics (PhD)	Theravada	British physicist who ordained as a monk at Oxford Buddha Vihara after a career in theoretical particle physics. physicsworld.com
Jeremy Hayward	Physics (PhD)	Vajrayana (Shambhala)	English nuclear physicist who became a student of Chögyam Trungpa and dedicated his life to Buddhist teachings.
Wang Shuo (Xianqi Mage)	Physics (PhD)	Chan (Chinese Mahayana)	Chinese nuclear and thermal physics PhD from Tsinghua who became a monk at Longquan Temple in 2011 from an atheist background.
Xian Wei (Xianwei)	Biophysics (PhD)	Chan (Chinese Mahayana)	Chinese biophysics PhD from Chinese Academy of Sciences who became a

Vaidika	Vaidika	Vaidika	Academy of Sciences who became a monk at Longquan Temple, finding science insufficient for life's questions. mdpi.com
Mage)			
Li Minghao	Physics (Graduate)	Zen	Chinese theoretical physicist who converted from atheism, emphasizing Zen meditation.
Kurt Keutzer	Computer Science (PhD)	Tibetan (Vajrayana)	American CS PhD from Indiana University who converted while studying Tibetan, integrating Buddhism with AI research.
Henk Barendregt	Mathematics (PhD)	Zen	Dutch mathematical logic PhD who converted after meeting a Zen teacher at Stanford.
Piet Hut	Physics (PhD)	Zen	Dutch theoretical physicist who converted through Zen practice and founded an institute linking science and Buddhism.
Ajahn Brahm (Peter Betts)	Physics (PhD)	Theravada	British theoretical physicist PhD from Cambridge who converted and became a prominent monk. reddit.com
Liu Zhiyu	Mathematics (Undergraduate)	Chan (Chinese Mahayana)	Chinese math prodigy (IMO gold medalist) who rejected MIT scholarship to become a monk, later returned to lay life but remains Buddhist. scmp.com
B. Alan Wallace	Physics (Undergraduate)	Tibetan (Vajrayana)	American with physics undergrad who converted, ordained as a monk, and later became a scholar integrating science and Buddhism.
Lama Padma Samten	Physics (Graduate)	Tibetan/Zen (Vairavana/Mahavana)	Brazilian quantum physicist who converted, studied under masters, and

Santori

(Vajrayana, Mahayana)

(Alfredo
Aveline)

converted, studied under masters, and

founded a Buddhist center.

[scijournal.org](#)

Yuan Ba	Physics (Graduate)	Mahayana	Chinese physics researcher who converted at Larung Gar Academy, seeing compatibility with Einstein's theories. mdpi.com
Yuan Yin	Physics (Graduate)	Mahayana	Chinese theoretical physicist who converted at Larung Gar, aligning higher-dimensional theories with Buddhist concepts. mdpi.com
Ven. Yan Shi	Mathematics (Graduate, Associate Professor)	Mahayana	Chinese math professor who became a monk while retaining passion for mathematics. dharma drum.org
Judith Roitman	Mathematics (PhD)	Zen	American mathematician and retired professor who converted to Zen in the Kwan Um School. en.wikipedia.org
Yu-Chun Wang	Computer Science (PhD)	Mahayana	Scholar with CS PhD who converted and became Assistant Professor of Buddhist Studies. tianzhubuddhistnetwork.org
Chester Carlson	Physics (Undergraduate)	Zen	American physicist and inventor of xerography who converted to Buddhism later in life. en.wikipedia.org

Statistical Analysis on How Each Tradition is Favored

To analyze the favorability of each Buddhist tradition among these 18 individuals, I calculated the frequency and percentage of each tradition. This is a closed-ended mathematics question, so the solution steps are explained below:

1. **Data Collection:** Group the individuals by their specified tradition (Theravada: 2,

vajrayana: 1, Chan: 3, Zen: 5, Tibetan: 3, Mahayana: 4). Note that Chan and Zen are subsets of Mahayana but are treated separately here as distinct traditions per common classification; Tibetan is often Vajrayana but listed as specified.

2. **Frequency Count:** Count the number of individuals per tradition.
3. **Percentage Calculation:** For each tradition, divide its count by the total number of individuals (18) and multiply by 100 to get the percentage. Formula: Percentage = $(\text{Count} / \text{Total}) \times 100$. For example, for Zen: $(5 / 18) \times 100 \approx 27.78\%$.
4. **Interpretation:** Zen is the most favored (27.8%), likely due to its minimalist, meditative approach appealing to analytical minds in math and physics. Mahayana follows (22.2%), reflecting broad philosophical compatibility. Chan and Tibetan tie (16.7% each), common among Chinese and Western converts respectively for cultural or intellectual reasons. Theravada (11.1%) and Vajrayana (5.6%) are less represented, possibly as they emphasize monasticism or esoteric practices less aligned with scientific careers.

Buddhist Tradition	Count	Percentage (%)
Zen	5	27.8
Mahayana	4	22.2
Chan	3	16.7
Tibetan	3	16.7
Theravada	2	11.1
Vajrayana	1	5.6
Total	18	100.0