



Malaysia

Asia

Geography

Area 330,434 sq km. Two distinct parts: Peninsular (West) Malaysia on the Kra peninsula of mainland Asia (PM), and East Malaysia (EM) consisting of the territories of Sarawak and Sabah on the northern third of the island of Borneo. Well-watered, tropical rainforest.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	27,913,990	1.72%
2020	32,016,875	1.28%
2030	35,275,495	0.88%

PM 79.2%; Sabah 12.0%; Sarawak 8.8%.

Capital Kuala Lumpur 1,519,166. **Other major cities** Penang 1.4 million; Klang 1.1mill. **Urbanites** 72.2%. Chinese and Indians are largely urban. **Pop under 15 yrs** 30%. **Life expectancy** 74.1 yrs.

Peoples

The Malay population is increasing at the expense of the Chinese and Indian populations.

Bumiputeras (indigenous peoples) 58.4%. 141 peoples.

Malay 41.8%. Peninsular Malay 26.0%; Orang Pantai Timur 8.2%; Orang Negeri 3.3%; Indonesian 2.9%. Predominantly rural, but dominating politics, civil service, armed forces and police.

Tribal peoples 16.6%. Borneo-Kalimantan (91 peoples) 7.6%; Banjar(2) 4.7%; Filipino(10) 3.1%. A majority in Sarawak, and largest segment of Sabah's population.

Chinese 31.0%. 12 peoples. Hokkien 7.0%; Hakka 6.3%; Cantonese 5.1%; Teochew 3.7%; Mandarin 3.6%. Influential in commerce and business.

South Asian 9.4%. Tamil 6.6%; Nepali 0.8%. Mainly urban or poor estate workers. Almost all in PM.

Southeast Asia 0.8%. 10 peoples.

Other 0.4%. Western, Arab, Iranian and others.

Literacy 88.7%. **Official language** Malay (Bahasa Malay). **All languages** 145. **Indigenous languages** 137. **Languages with Scriptures** 16Bi 10NT 24por.

Economy

Export-based nation producing rubber, palm oil, petroleum and forest and agricultural products as well as, increasingly, hi-tech manufacturing. Large-scale industrialization and increased exploitation of natural resources has rapidly boosted the economy. Government-enforced programmes since 1971 include positive discrimination in order to uplift the Malay and indigenous populations' economic status to a level closer to the Chinese and Indian groups who have dominated the economy since before independence. A new wave of immigrants from poorer Asian countries, attracted by the wealth, continues to increase.

HDI Rank 66th/182. **Public debt** 40% of GDP. **Income/person** \$8,118 (17% of USA).

Politics

Independent from Britain in 1957 as the Federation of Malaya. In 1963, Sabah and Sarawak joined to form Malaysia, a federation of 13 states with a constitutional monarchy. Recent years have been dominated by the efforts of the politically powerful Malays to extend their influence over the non-Malay half of the population in educational, economic and religious life, enriching and empowering themselves, while many normal Malays are left behind. The ruling party has recently lost its majority to a broad coalition of Chinese, liberal and Islamist parties. Political Islam, both in the ruling party as well Islamist opposition groups, threatens to further polarize the country on both religious and ethnic lines.

Religion

Sunni Islam is the official religion. Despite constitutional freedoms, discriminatory legislation and actions against minorities seem to be creeping in. Shari'a law, applicable for Muslims only, actually supercedes constitutional law on many issues, a portentous issue in a country with a strong and agitating Islamist movement. Proselytism of Muslims is illegal, but considerable effort and lawmaking is exercised to induce tribal peoples and other minorities to become Muslim.

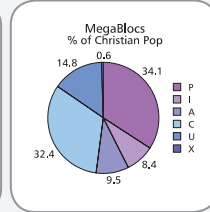
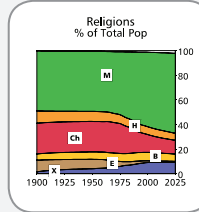
Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Muslim	62.61	17,476,949	2.0%
Chinese	12.70	3,545,077	0.6%
Christian	9.43	2,632,289	1.9%
Buddhist	6.50	1,814,409	1.1%
Hindu	6.20	1,730,667	1.4%
Non-religious	1.30	362,882	5.2%
Ethnoreligionist	0.90	251,226	-2.3%
Baha'i	0.30	83,742	-0.2%
Sikh	0.06	16,748	-1.4%

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	47	3.22	898,000	1.6%
Independent	18	0.79	220,000	2.8%
Anglican	1	0.90	250,000	2.6%
Catholic	1	3.06	855,000	1.8%
Orthodox	1	0.01	2,000	-1.8%
Marginal	7	0.05	13,000	4.3%
Unaffiliated		1.40	391,000	0.0%

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	4.3	1,207,985	2.9%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	2.3	653,369	2.8%
Pentecostals	0.5	141,261	3.8%

Missionaries from Malaysia
P,I,A 430 (380 long-term), 180 international.

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	168	452,381	855,000
Methodist Church	P	382	109,871	303,984
Anglican Church	A	274	145,349	250,000
Evang Ch of Borneo SIB	P	1,090	110,000	242,000
Independent Churches	I	601	84,118	143,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	343	51,500	64,000
Basel Christian Church	P	179	30,440	55,400
Assemblies of God	P	325	34,097	53,486
Malaysia Baptist Conv	P	184	18,750	37,500
Protestant Ch of Sabah	P	302	17,964	30,000
Full Gospel Assembly	I	62	12,500	25,000
Presbyterian Church	P	100	7,000	14,500
Christian Brethren	P	150	6,750	13,500
CNEC Churches	P	102	4,600	11,500
True Jesus Church	I	36	7,200	11,448
Other denominations[51]		905	66,703	127,868
Total Christians[75]		5,203	1,159,223	2,238,186



Answers to Prayer

- 1 Greater accountability in the political sphere** as a strong coalition opposition brings balance to Parliament. Amid significant corruption and abuses of power comes a growing hope for and expectation of genuine justice, political transparency and less discrimination against all minority groups.
- 2 The maturation of the Church.** Growth is steady if not spectacular, but churches are increasingly engaging in the social and political spheres. They are increasingly savvy about how to operate as a vibrant and outward-focused faith in an Islamic nation.
- 3 Christians are networking and cooperating** as never before, across confessional, denominational and even racial lines. National-level networks for churches, for evangelicals, for prayer and for mission agencies are all growing in strength and effectiveness.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Malaysian society faces a troubled and contested future** as fault lines appear.
 - a) Malays,** the largest, most dominant and most quickly growing population, are divided among themselves on a number of levels. Pray for changes in these realms:
 - i Economic.** The ruling party's affirmative action of the last 40 years has enriched a minority of Malays, while increasing the gap between the connected elite and the poorer majority. Such discrimination and favouritism now hobbles economic progress as well as foreign investment.
 - ii Political.** The ruling party, UNMO, faces an opposition coalition comprised of moderates, liberals, Chinese ethnic parties and even Islamists. This indicates the level of disillusion with the

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government. The next election will demonstrate if the coalition's recent strong showing is based on large-scale change or is just a protest vote against UNMO. Appeasing both the minorities and conservative Muslims, while holding the country together, is a difficult balancing act.

iii Religious. Powerful and vocal Islamist agendas are resulting in passing legislations on state and federal levels that effectively introduce sharia law for Malays and deepen the divide between Islamic radicals and moderates/liberals. Many rural Malays practice a folk Islam influenced by pre-Islamic Hindu and Buddhist elements as well as animist practices; they will inevitably be pushed into adopting a "purer" version of Islam.

b) Minority groups feel frustrated with discrimination and corruption as well as with changes to civil and religious liberties. Some seek legal and political solutions, but others plan for a future outside Malaysia – a potentially tragic loss of diversity and economic clout for a land that has long prided itself on both.

2 Islam is gaining ground in both numbers and socio-political power. Although many, including large numbers of Malays, are opposed to shari'a, the creeping changes in Malaysian public, religious and legal affairs are cause for concern and for prayer.

a) Islam itself is a battleground. With over 100 radical Islamist groups, there is never-ending agitation for sharia and the subjugation of all Malaysia to a much stricter version of Islam. Pray against the imposition of a harsh, aggressive Islam, which would bode ill for moderates, for minorities and for any Christian ministry.

b) Apostasy laws make conversion from Islam illegal in all but one state, with many states meting out harsh punishment for such offenses. It is nigh impossible for a Muslim (and therefore, by definition, for all Malays) to legally change their religion. Pray that federal constitutional rights might be upheld in courts. Pray for discretion and courage for all Muslims who choose to follow Christ.

c) Proselytizing Muslims is technically not illegal in federal law, but it is illegal in the more powerful state law in 10 of 13 states. Punishment includes a prison sentence and caning. Malays are increasingly isolated from the gospel, both socially and legally; pray for opportunities for them to encounter Jesus. Pray also for wisdom and fearlessness for Christians seeking to share the good news with Muslims.

3 Religious freedom for all faiths is constitutionally guaranteed despite changes that threaten this. Pray especially that the Christian community may continue to possess the liberty to practice, profess and propagate their faith amid the discrimination and intimidation arising from the process of Islamization currently occurring.

4 The Christian community faces many challenges beyond the external issues of religious freedom and evangelizing Muslims. Pray for:

a) Unity among Christians. They face social ills, injustices and growing discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities. The Christian Federation of Malaysia represents evangelicals, Catholics and mainline denominations before the government. The National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) consists of evangelical churches and organizations focused on building unity, prayer, ministry and mission. The NECF assists evangelicals in transforming the nation by promoting economic sufficiency, justice/advocacy and national righteousness.

b) Godly leadership within the Christian community. Pray for godly leaders who are prepared, at considerable cost, to lead their churches by nurturing and empowering members to live godly lives – in the discipline of prayer and the task of evangelism – as they manifest witness to the concerns and needs of every sphere of society.

c) Lack of Christian workers. Many smaller churches have no trained pastor, even with a healthy number of Bible colleges, seminaries and church-training programmes. Too few respond to God's call to service because of family expectations, materialism, a lack of role models and the perception that years of theological training are required.

d) Marginalization creates anxiety, a ghetto mentality and the desire to withdraw from being the witnesses Christians should be. Emigration rates of professionals and Bible school graduates are high.

5 Since Malay became the official national language, Christians have been confronted with a series of challenges. Pray for improvements in:

a) The need for Christian literature in the Malay language. Writers are few and the market is still

small, yet the younger generation is educated in this medium. There are numerous Christian bookstores, including online ones, and an active Bible Society.

- b) Restrictions on the use of the Malay language** Bible and other Christian books. These were banned when the government deemed their contents to be detrimental to public peace. One main issue is the use of the word Allah for God in such material. After forcing Malaysians to use Malay as a common language, the government now fears that such use in Christian literature and services will induce Malays to become Christian. Pray for Christian publishers and ministries to be strong and shrewd in defending their legal rights over this issue.
- c) The language used in church services.** Many churches, especially Catholic and the SIB, have congregations that use Bahasa Malaysia. Implementing an official and national language could be a positive development; pray that freedom to use the language in its entirety, by all faith communities, would reflect the multi-faith and multi-cultural make-up of the nation.

6 Ministry to young people is crucial as the generation gap widens and many churches consist predominantly of older people. The temptations to young people – criminal activity, gambling, substance abuse, sexual immorality – are more pronounced than ever and are part of the reason for the resurgence of fundamentalist Islam. Many Indian, Chinese, East Malaysians and immigrants are finding Jesus through agencies such as **YFC, CCCI, Navigators, SU, FES(IFES)** and others working in schools and universities. Pray for these ministries and their focus on discipling Christian young people to stand against the many influences that draw them away from their Saviour.

7 Expatriate Christian workers have declined in numbers due to visa restrictions. Their presence is still valued, and various ministries depend on their input. Pray for the issue of necessary visas and extensions; long-term presence is possible for those with adequate funds. Pray also for effective ministry within the limitations that exist.

8 The missions vision of the Church in Malaysia continues to increase. There are over 30 agencies invested in the harvest. The NECF as a national body trains local congregations and denominations to send out qualified workers. The Malaysian Centre for Global Missions also works to this end. Major agencies include Interserve, **WBT, OMF, OM, STAMP/Strategic Missions Program, Methodists and YWAM.** Many independent churches send workers directly as well; these are nearly impossible to enumerate.

9 The immigrant and foreign labourer population has swelled to over two million – probably significantly more with illegals included. They come from Indonesia, Philippines, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam, India and elsewhere. This includes some of the world's least-evangelized peoples such as Acehnese and Miningkabau. Most work for very low wages in difficult, often back-breaking, labour. They are mostly Muslim but with some Hindus and Buddhists as well. The Malaysian Church has a wonderful opportunity to reach many unevangelized groups who are right on their doorstep. Pray that Christians might have the vision and the courage to reach out and seize this opportunity.

Peninsular Malaysia

Geography

Area 132,000 sq km. 40% of Malaysia; the south-easternmost point of mainland Asia.

Population 22,289,000.

Peoples

Malay 64%.

Chinese 27%.

Indian 8%.

Orang Asli (the original indigenous peoples)

1%. Largest: Semai 42,000; Jakun 22,000; Temuan 19,000; Temier 18,000.

Religion

Muslim 64%; Chinese religions/Buddhist 24.6%; Hindu 7.5%; Christian 2.8%; Other 1.1%.

Challenges for Prayer

1 The Church is small, but growing. Only 3% of Peninsular Malaysia (PM) is Christian. PM has 80% of Malaysia's population but only 25% of its Christians. Christianity, however, is growing among all non-Muslim ethnic groups; about 10% of the Orang Asli, 10% of Chinese and 8% of Indians are Christian. Still, the continual external pressures from Islam at every level and from non-Christian families undermine progress. Pray for continued church growth, but also for a deep work of the Holy Spirit in preserving, building up and emboldening believers to thrive amid the pressure.

2 The relentless pressure from Islamist circles has manifested in court decisions related to religion, apostasy and conversion. Decisions reflect fear by the judiciary and weakening of the civil courts' constitutional power. Pray that the government might uphold the religious rights of all citizens. Pray also for the thwarting of radical Islamist elements seeking to oppress all other expressions of religion.

3 Church practices must adapt to changing realities. Cell groups are thriving, especially among the Bumiputeras (both Malay and non-Malay). Using Bahasa Malaysia in church services can also introduce complications because of certain laws. The lure of materialism and worldly lifestyles tempts many young urban Christians of all ethnic groups; meanwhile, traditional congregations are increasingly aged. Effective discipleship and community must be developed. Pray for wisdom for church leaders and for renewal that sees churches full and relevant.

4 Pray for the less-evangelized. The Malaysian Church has the resources and the understanding of the local scene in PM to reach the less-reached, but it also needs the courage and commitment. Pray especially for:

a) The Malays, regarded by the government as Muslim by definition. The legal and social barriers are high, but it is possible for Christians to share their faith. There are some Malay believers in house groups and multi-ethnic churches, but there are no viable public congregations of ethnic Malays. Malays can be reached more easily abroad and in nearby Singapore. By dint of both population and religion, the Malay people are one of the world's largest unreached groups.

b) The Chinese. Although there is a significant minority of Christians, specific areas need prayer. Materialism and traditional religions are strong. Churches are growing, but mostly among the urban, middle-class, English-speaking Chinese. Those speaking primarily Hainanese, Hakka and Teochew have much less Christian presence. Rural and small-town Chinese are patchily evangelized, and only half of the 450 Chinese villages have a church.

c) The Orang Asli number less than 200,000 despite being the original inhabitants of the Malaysian peninsula.

i They are subject to both exploitation and Islamization. The Malay-dominated government regards them as Muslims, even though most are animist. They are generally not interested in education, technology or development and are therefore very vulnerable to exploitation.

The forests in which they traditionally live are being logged out or reserved for recreation/wilderness.

ii *There are no churches or believers in 8 of the 19 groups.* Only the Semai and Mah Meri have any of the Bible in their language. The Orang Asli have three Bible training centres; the Semai and other West Malaysians work among other Orang Asli groups. JEKOA is an indigenous church comprised of Orang Asli people; along with SIB and others, they focus on seeing a church planting movement born among the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia. Pray that an indigenous and appropriate expression of the gospel might take root among them.

d) **Indians.** Indian Malaysians sadly comprise a disproportionately high number of the country's poor and, occasionally, delinquents. There are many Tamil Christians, but few among the estate labourers. Other Indian ethnic minorities are less reached, the Punjabis (mostly Sikh) and Telugus in particular. Indian Muslims number nearly 60,000; there has been no specific outreach to them. The Tamil Bible Institute (AsEF) is training Christian workers to reach Indian communities with the gospel.

e) **The socially marginalized.** Drug addiction is a major problem, especially among the Malay youth. Once addicted or convicted, they are generally rejected by family and end up in a life of crime. Crime rates, in particular among youth, are at alarming levels, as are divorce rates. Pray for effective Christian ministry to all who suffer from these serious threats to healthy society.

Sabah (Formerly North Borneo)

Geography

Area 74,000 sq km. Rich in natural resources.
Population 3,150,000. Probably higher due to rapid population growth augmented by many immigrants from the Philippines and Indonesia.

Peoples

All figures approximate.

Indigenous peoples 45.2%. Of 38 peoples, the largest: Kadazan-Dusun(18) 18.1%; Murut(11) 3.3%; Bajau 2.5%.

Other Malaysian 29.6%. Malay 11.5%; Chinese 13.2%; others 4.8%.

Migrant peoples 25.1%. The real number is likely to be much higher, but is impossible to document. Mostly Indonesian and Filipino (especially Tausugg).

Religion

Muslim 63%; Christian 29%; Buddhist/Chinese 7%; Other 1%.

Challenges for Prayer

1 Government, on both the state and federal levels, has enriched itself while overseeing the nation's poorest state (26% are below the poverty line). The rich natural resources are plundered, but locals have not benefitted. Racial discrimination, exploitation of immigrants, corruption and higher levels of crime (including drug trafficking and piracy) blight this beautiful region. Pray for leadership that is honest, impartial, just and committed to stewarding the environment and governing the people with wisdom and righteousness.

2 Rapid church growth is taking place among the Chinese, Kadazan-Dusun, Tagal and Murut peoples through the work of the Basel Mission, Anglicans and SIB. The SIB has over 500 congregations in Sabah. The charismatic movement deeply affects nearly every denomination. Over one-third of Chinese and the majority of indigenous peoples are now Christian. Nominalism, the drift to the cities of tribal peoples and a serious lack of full-time workers are unresolved problems for churches. Pray for greater unity and cooperation, social engagement and evangelism, and pray against apathy and undue influence from political interests. The Sabah Council of Churches seeks to serve and catalyze the church on all these issues. The great difficulty for expatriate mission and ministry makes it necessary for local Christians to evangelize the unreached in Sabah, if this work is to be done.

3 Peoples needing prayer.

a) **The Muslim peoples** are almost untouched. Pray for specific outreach to:

- i *The Filipino-related peoples*, many of whom are refugees from the strife resulting from Muslim agitation in Mindanao, Philippines.
- ii *The Indonesians*, most being illegal immigrants from Sulawesi and Java. Little is being done to reach them.
- iii *The local Malay* and Muslim tribal peoples, notably the Bisaya and Bajau.

b) **Indigenous (Bumiputera) groups** are neglected in many ways.

- i *Some groups are still only partially evangelized*, though there have been large people movements among them. Few languages have the NT. There are Bible translation needs in 12 languages but virtually no foreign personnel left; nationals must pick up the slack.
- ii *These rural, tribal peoples* suffer the most intense levels of poverty, unemployment and lack of education. The government fails to invest its significant income from Sabah's natural resources into assisting non-Malay Bumiputeras. Claims that Muslim immigrants receive greater favour and help than the Christian and animist tribals are common.

Sarawak

Geography

Area 124,500 sq km. Forested, but subject to over-exploitation.

Population 2,475,000.

Peoples

All figures approximate.

Indigenous 48.2%. Over 46 groups, largest: Iban (Sea Dayak) 30.5%; Bidayuh/Dayak 10%; Melanau 2.2%; Orang Ulu – Kedayan, Kayan(3), Kenyah(5), Punan 5.5%.

Malay 22.2%.

Other Malaysian 25.9%. Chinese 25.5%.

Other immigrants 3.7%.

Religion

Christian 42%; Muslim 32%; Buddhist/Chinese 14%; Traditional ethnic 5%; Other/unknown 8%.

Challenges for Prayer

1 Sarawak enjoys spiritual blessing with 70 years of God moving. The SIB has nearly 300 congregations, over five Bible schools, a work among over 10 peoples – many unreached – and vigorous outreach to rural areas. The SIB focuses on the north, the Anglicans the south, and the Methodists the centre with over 600 preaching points among the Iban and work among urban Chinese Malaysians. The majority of Iban are Christians and nearly half the Chinese now profess Christianity, though a significant number are more nominal in their faith.

2 Poverty, neglect and exploitation explain the wide disparity between the haves and have nots. The tribal peoples comprise almost all of the indigenous poor, especially in the remote rural areas. They have been failed by a rapacious and discriminatory government, self-serving local officials and even by unmoved churches. They enjoy very few opportunities for improvement in education, employment or healthcare. Pray for good governance on both the state and grassroots levels; pray also for Christians to become more mobilized to assist their disadvantaged brethren and to reach out in love to those more needy than themselves.

3 The Church faces trials on many fronts. Materialism is a strong pull in urban areas; pressure from Muslims is strong in rural areas. The underlying animism and traditional beliefs of the Iban people and other former headhunters, as well as their geographic isolation, make ministry and discipleship painstakingly difficult. The many Chinese churches suffer mixed fortunes, some thriving and some struggling. Pray for churches to overcome these trials; pray also for greater relevance, passion for the lost and unity across denominational and ethnic

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