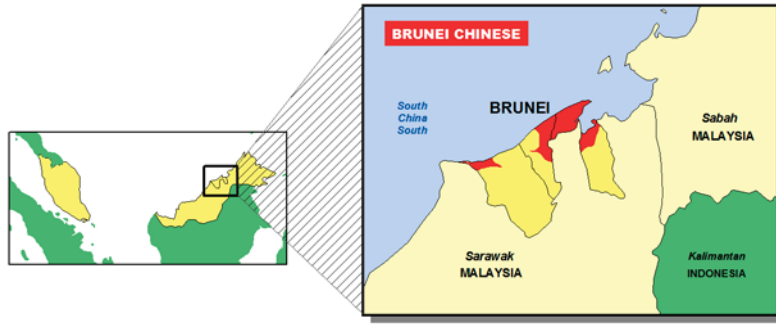


BRUNEI CHINESE



Population	Major Religion	Language
55,000	Buddhism	Mandarin

Who are the Brunei Chinese?

The Chinese are a minority race in Brunei. Their first arrival in the country is not certain but there were 736 Chinese in 1911. They originated from Mainland China. Later, many from Sarawak, Singapore, and Hong Kong came to work in the oil industry while other Chinese settlers pursued agriculture in the rural areas.

Today, most of the younger generations of Chinese are citizens of Brunei. Most of them refer to themselves as Brunei Chinese and they would no longer call China home. However, it is not true that they have cut themselves off from their roots because relations between the Chinese community in Brunei and their counterparts in China are still very strong through the Chinese Embassy in Brunei.

Besides speaking the various Chinese dialects, about 16 percent of the Chinese people use English as their first language while some 30 percent of them are Mandarin speakers. Mandarin is widely used as a means of daily communication between the Chinese people. The Chinese community is constituted of all the major dialect groups—the Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, and Teochew. They are concentrated mainly in the Brunei Muara district, which is the center of government and business.

What are their lives like?

The Chinese community generally feels insecure because many are still considered foreigners even though they were born in Brunei. But they being the biggest minority group, continue to dominate in the field of commerce.

Generally speaking, they conduct much of the country's commercial activity that has prospered Brunei. Some of them hold key governmental positions, including the position of Permanent Secretary. Yet, many are

reevaluating their position in Brunei because they are not favored in areas such as government employment and tertiary education.

The Chinese in Brunei coordinate their activities through associations. The associations make annual donations to schools, though they are not directly responsible for establishing the eight Chinese medium schools (5 primary and 3 secondary) in the country. They also contribute to charity, welfare, religion, recreation, and sports.

What do they believe?

The majority of Chinese in Brunei practice traditional Chinese religions while a small minority are non-religious. About 15 percent are Christians but many of these are nominal believers and a smaller proportion deeply committed to the Christian faith. Traditional Chinese religious practices in Brunei incorporate elements from Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and other animistic beliefs. They also include practice of the customs and traditions from all the various Chinese dialect groups. An important focus of Chinese religious life has been the Buddhist Tenyun Temple built by Quemoy Hokkiens in 1918.

What are their needs?

Economically, most of the Chinese have better lives when compared with the native people in Brunei. But this does not mean that there are no poor Chinese. Many still need proper health care. They need to repair their dilapidated homes, and their children need formal education. Among the more successful Chinese, materialism can lead to indifference to their own spiritual needs and to the physical needs of the less fortunate. Pray that God would call out resourceful and committed believers to help meet both spiritual and other needs.