

# Vietnamese



Population	1,000,000
Major Religion	Buddhism
Language	Vietnamese
Percent Christian	Less than 1%
Bible Translation	Yes



## Who are the Vietnamese?

**T**he Vietnamese come to Cambodia for many reasons. Some have lived here for generations. Vietnamese began migrating to Cambodia as early as the seventeenth century. In 1863, when Cambodia became a French colony, many Vietnamese were brought to Cambodia by the French to work on plantations and occupy civil servant positions. During the Lon Nol Regime (1970-1975) and Pol Pot regime (1975 -1979), many of the Vietnamese living in Cambodia were killed. Others were either repatriated or escaped to Vietnam or Thailand. During the ten year Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia from 1979 until 1989 many of the Vietnamese who had previously lived in Cambodia returned. Along with them came friends and relatives. Also, many former South Vietnamese soldiers came to Cambodia fleeing persecution from the communist government. Today, due to the high unemployment rate in Vietnam, many Vietnamese come to Cambodia looking for work.

## What are their lives like?

While many Vietnamese come to Cambodia looking for a better life, few find it. Due to Vietnam's ten year occupation of Cambodia, most Cambodians harbor a deep distrust and dislike of the Vietnamese. Most Vietnamese in Cambodia live in poverty with inadequate food and housing and no access to clean water. Many are without land, living in floating villages on the lake or rivers. They earn their living as fishermen, sellers and laborers. Diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS are spreading among the people. They have limited access to medical care and educational systems. However, there is a growing number of middle-class Vietnamese. They own restaurants, computer shops, beauty salons or other small businesses.

Most Vietnamese maintain their own language, culture and traditions, with little integration into Khmer culture.

## What do they believe?

If asked, a majority of Vietnamese would claim to be Buddhist. However, though most Vietnamese would identify themselves as Buddhist, they are unfamiliar with the teachings and practices of Buddhism. The Vietnamese follow Mahayana Buddhism, not the Theravada Buddhism of Cambodian.

The more important religious practices of the Vietnamese center around ancestor worship and animism. Food and beverage are regularly offered to deceased relatives and other spirits. On special holidays, paper votives representing money and gold are burned and sent to the deceased ancestors. It is their belief that these spirits have the ability to influence the lives of the living, so they must be appeased. They live in constant fear that an unappeased spirit will bring misfortune upon them and their families.

## What are their needs?

The majority of the Vietnamese of Cambodia live in extreme poverty. They lack clean water, sanitation facilities, schools, basic health care and jobs. Many Vietnamese are considered stateless, nor recognized as citizens of either Cambodia or Vietnam. But their greatest need is the joy and hope that comes in knowing Christ. Many of the Vietnamese have never heard the name of Jesus. Pray that God will send harvesters to this field and open doors to the Gospel among the Vietnamese of Cambodia.