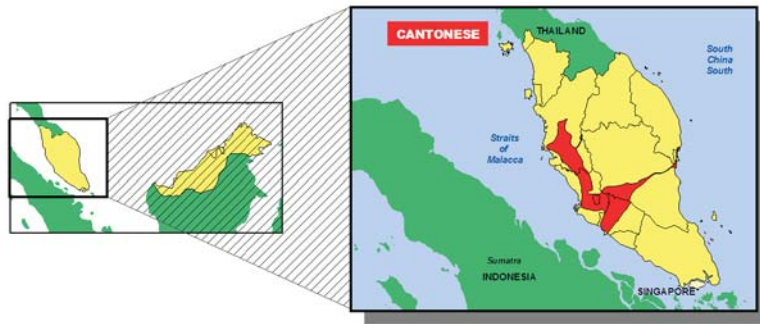


# CANTONESE



Population	Major Religion	Language
1,200,000	Chinese Folk Religion	Cantonese

## Who are the Cantonese?

Cantonese is the second largest Chinese dialect spoken among Chinese in Malaysia. A majority of Cantonese speaking Chinese are the descendants of immigrants who came from the Chinese provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi in the mid 19th and early 20th centuries.

Cantonese as a spoken language tends to sound more aggressive and rude than the other Chinese dialects. Cantonese is the Chinese lingua franca in cities and towns such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Kuantan, Seremban, and Sandakan. The Cantonese are one of the most urbanized groups with more than 80 percent living in towns. In the central region of Peninsular Malaysia, it is easy to find Chinese conversing in Cantonese. They are the majority Chinese people in the states of Negri Sembilan, Perak, Pahang, and Sabah.

## What are their lives like?

In the past, the traditional stereotype of the Cantonese, as well as other Chinese groups, was that they were thrifty, expedient, hard working, and prudent. They were also regarded as shrewd in business and able to quickly learn new skills, which for the most part, are those of small traders and crafts people. However, a better way to describe the Cantonese is that they have adopted a pragmatic solution to the problem of struggling to thrive. They place great importance and value on education because they view education as a means to improve their standard of living. Today, the Cantonese together with the rest of the Chinese communities are one of the most academically competitive groups in the country.

As they are favored in the public service, private sector is the main source of employment for almost the

whole Chinese population inclusive of the Cantonese. Presently, Cantonese people are no longer restricted to work in positions like blue-collar technical workers and goldsmiths but are employed in all sorts of trade and services.

## What do they believe?

Like other Chinese groups, the majority of Cantonese profess faith in Buddhism but what they practice is correctly called Chinese folk religion. It incorporates traditional Chinese practices such as the belief in deities (bodhisattvas) who help people gain salvation.

Most Cantonese households have the deity Guanyin (the goddess of mercy) on the family altar. Guanyin is believed to have compassion for people in need. Religion, like other aspects of their life, is pragmatic and relates to the everyday issues of life. At the time of offering incense it is a routine for the Cantonese to ask Guanyin and the other deities or spirits for blessing, protection, good health, etc. More than 5% of the Cantonese are professing Christians.

## What are their needs?

Most Cantonese place great importance and value on education and skills. They believe that sufficient education and skill improvement can help them improve their standard of living. In spite of professed beliefs in either Buddhism or Christianity, the risk of materialism replacing recognition of true spiritual needs is great. Pray that God's children will be reawakened to His Truth and be motivated to become His instruments in demonstrating the transforming Power of the good news. Pray that the Cantonese will see the love, grace, and mercy of God in the commitment and service of these instruments.