

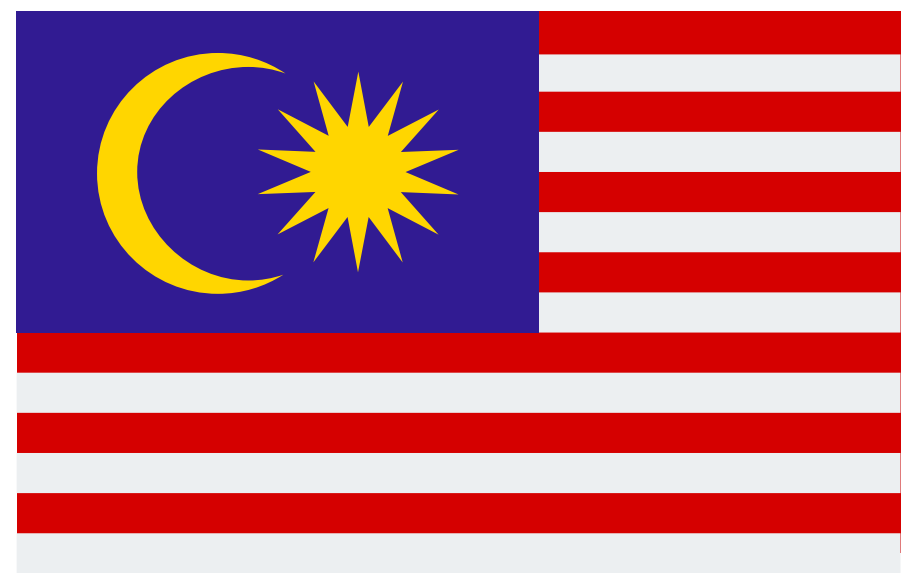
MALAYSIA



Country Profiles

This profile is a part of our Leading Multiculturalism: Canada's Impact on Global Diversity Policies series

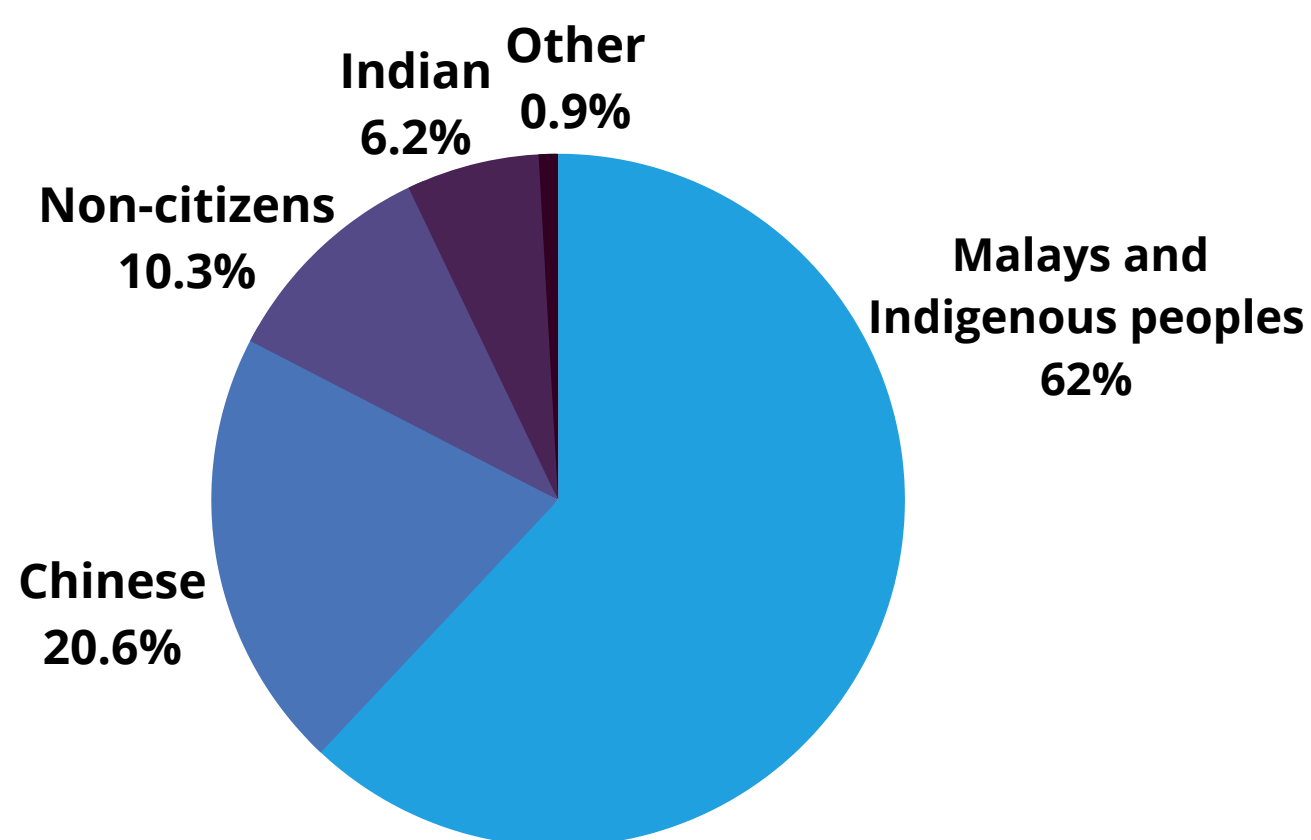
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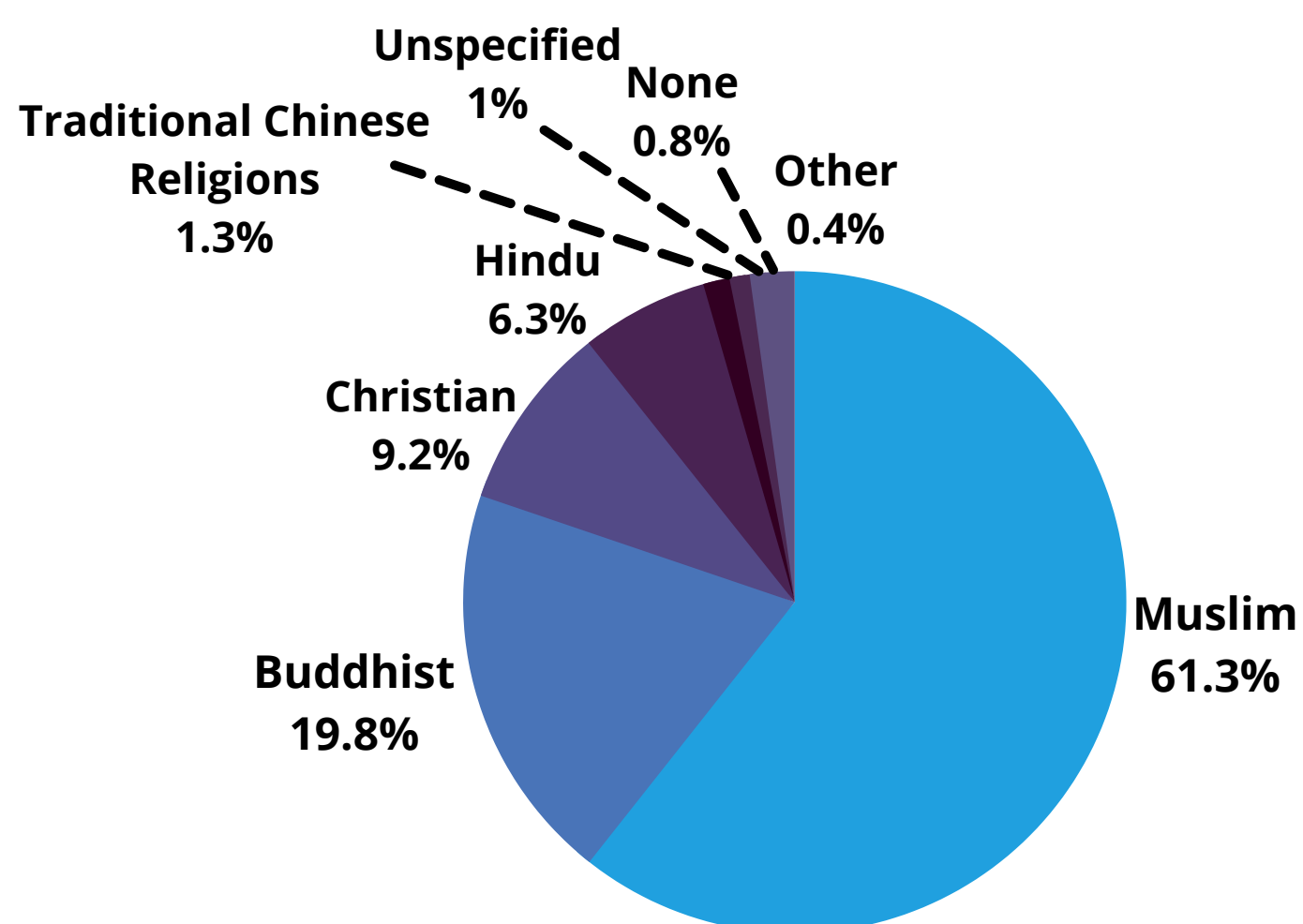
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Malaysia was colonized by the Portuguese and Dutch in the 16th and 17th centuries. It fell under British rule in the 18th century as well as the 19th century after a brief Japanese occupation during the Second World War.

DEMOGRAPHICS



RELIGION



MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

- **Term:** "multiethnic", "multicultural"
- **Approach:** Top-down constitutional protections

DOMESTIC

- Constitutional provisions exist for the protection of equal rights although no use of the terms, "diversity", "minority", "multiculturalism"
- National Culture Policy aimed to "strengthen national unity through culture" and strengthen "national culture".
- 1970 "Rakun Negara" national principles emphasize the importance of unity, equity and diverse cultural traditions.
- National Economic Policy, National Development Policy and National Vision Policy act as affirmative action policies

INTERNATIONAL

Treaties

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Promotion on international scale

- No

Malaysia

Background

- **Population:** 32.66 million (in 2020)ⁱ
- **Demographics:** 62% Malays and Indigenous peoples (Bumiputera), 20.6% Chinese, 10.3% non-citizens, 6.2% Indian, 0.9% other (in 2017)ⁱⁱ
- **Languages:** Malay (official)ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Religion:** 61.3% Muslim, 19.8% Buddhist, 9.2% Christian, 6.3% Hindu, 1.3% traditional Chinese religions, 1% unspecified, 0.8% none, 0.4% other (in 2010)^{iv}
- **Terms:** Multiethnic, multicultural
- **Approach:** Top-down

Malaysia presents an interesting case for this analysis due to its ethnic and cultural diversity and the tensions that arise from its colonial past. Colonized by the Portuguese and Dutch in the 16th and 17th centuries, Malaysia fell under British rule in the 18th century as well as the 19th century after a brief Japanese occupation during the Second World War.^v As Malaysia's economy began to grow in the 19th century, and poor Malaysians were unwilling to do cheap labour, Chinese, Indian and Indonesian immigrants flocked to Malaysia to adopt low paying jobs.^{vi} Today, ethnic Malays make up almost two thirds of the population while ethnic Chinese and Indians are ethnic minorities.^{vii}

British colonial rule shaped social divisions among the new multiethnic society as ethnic Chinese dominated the marketplace and Indians occupied professional roles, angering ethnic Malays who perceived increasing economic disparities and social divisions – including patterns of physical separation.^{viii} As such, the disadvantaged minority in Malaysia appears to be ethnic Malays and Indigenous groups, rather than immigrant populations. Tasked with addressing these frequently arising ethnic tensions, the Malaysian government has taken affirmative action in the form of several economic policies that include ethnic quotas.

It is also notable that religion is important to Malaysians of all ethnicities and descent, as less than 1% identified as non-religious in 2010.^{ix} While the state religion is Islam, the constitution grants freedom of religion and government support for educational and other institutions that practice other religions.^x

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Legal

Approach

Government-led; not civil society

1971 National Economic Policy (NEP) aimed to reduce economic inequality and poverty (particularly among ethnic Malays) through ethnic quotas for business opportunities, higher education, state funds, etc.^{xi}

1991 National Development Policy (NDP) succeeded the NEP.^{xii}

2001 National Vision Policy (NVP) succeeded the NDP and NEP.^{xiii}

National Culture Policy aimed to “strengthen national unity through culture” and strengthen “national culture.”^{xiv}

2009 “1Malaysia” concept aimed to promote a national Malaysian identity and “cultural diversity” with new approaches to affirmative action, in response to those who claimed the affirmative action policies were discouraging business growth.^{xv}

Constitutional Protections

Overview: basic prohibition of discrimination based on “religion, race, descent or place of birth” and grants religious freedom:

- Article 3(1): Islam deemed the “religion of the federation” but other religions are welcomed
- Article 8(1)(2)(3) prohibits discrimination, including on the basis of “religion, race, descent or place of birth”
- Article 11(1)(3) grants freedom of religion, religious propagation and religious group rights
- Article 12(1) prohibits discrimination (based on “religion, race descent or place of birth” in public educational institutions and public educational aid funds
- Article 152(1)(a) specifies that the national language is Malay and that other languages should not be prohibited
- Article 136 states that all federal employees should be treated “impartially”, regardless of race

Note: no use of the terms, “diversity”, “minority”, “multiculturalism.”

Explicit Recognition of Multiculturalism

There is no explicit recognition of diversity or multiculturalism in the French Constitution. There is recognition of the term “secular”, but no official recognition of ethnicities or religions.^{xvi}

Comparative Analysis: Domestic Practical

Valuing and Active Promotion of Diversity

1970 “Rakun Negara” national principles emphasize the importance of unity, equity and diverse cultural traditions.^{xvii}

Multiculturalism as a Means to Integration

There are no domestic policies that promote Multiculturalism as a means to integration.

Affirmative Action Policies

NEP, NDP, NVP economic policies (as mentioned under domestic legal).

Comparative Analysis: International

International Treaties

Malaysia has taken no action on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969) nor the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976).

ⁱ “Malaysia,” The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, accessed November 26, 2020 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/my.html>

ⁱⁱ Central Intelligence Agency, “Malaysia.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Central Intelligence Agency, “Malaysia.”

^{iv} Central Intelligence Agency, “Malaysia.”

^v Central Intelligence Agency, “Malaysia.”

^{vi} Max U. Montesino, “Multi-ethnicity in the Malaysian Workplace: The Net Balance of 25 Years of Affirmative Policies as Observed by a Foreign Visitor,” *Indiana University-Perdue University Fort Wayne*: 1.

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- vii Central Intelligence Agency, "Malaysia."
- viii Montesino, "Multi-ethnicity in the Malaysian Workplace," 2.
- ix Central Intelligence Agency, "Malaysia."
- x "Malaysia 1957 (rev. 2007)," Constitute Project, accessed November 25, 2020, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Malaysia_2007?lang=en.
- xi Montesino, "Multi-ethnicity in the Malaysian Workplace," 2.
- xii Montesino, "Multi-ethnicity in the Malaysian Workplace," 3.
- xiii Montesino, "Multi-ethnicity in the Malaysian Workplace," 3.
- xiv "National Culture Policy," Government Policies, Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, last modified July 12, 2019, <https://www.pmo.gov.my/2019/07/national-culture-policy/>.
- xv Chan-Hoong Leong, and Noraini M. Noor, "Multiculturalism in Malaysia and Singapore: Contesting models," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 37, no. 6 (November 2013): 717. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147176713001119>.
- xvi "Law of December 9, 1905 Concerning the Separation of Church and State", Legifrance, Government of France, accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGITEXT000006070169/>.
- xvii "National Principles (Rukun Negara)," Malaysia Information, The Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.malaysia.gov.my/portal/content/30110>.