

Riau Malay of Indonesia

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Who are the Riau Malay?

The Riau Malay are the largest and most dominant ethnic group in the Riau province of Indonesia. This province comprises part of southern Sumatra, the Lingga archipelago and the Riau islands, a huge land-mass of 3,214 islands and over 94,000 sq km.

The Riau Malay have historically assimilated large numbers of nomadic and migrating peoples, including people of Banjar, Minangkabau, Javanese, Mandailing and Bugis ethnicity. Today, there are an estimated 2.2 million Riau Malay people including these assimilated groups. Some 1.6 million Riau Malay live on the Sumatra mainland, primarily in settlements along the Indragiri, Kampar and Siak rivers. Another 600,000 live on the Riau islands.

Languages

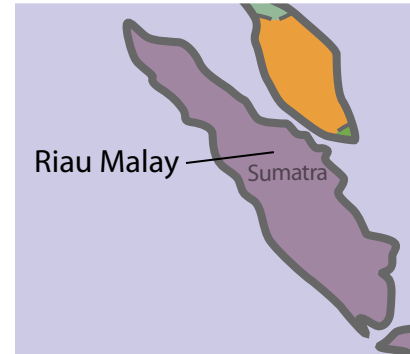
The primary language of most Riau Malay is *Bahasa Indonesia*, the Indonesian national language. Riau Malay, a dialect of Malay, is used at home and among themselves.

Livelihood

The Riau province exhibits many of the features of a “dual” economy. On the one hand there is a high technology, capital-intensive oil sector, and on the other a traditional low technology agricultural sector.

Riau province contains the most productive oil fields in Indonesia and pumps half the nation’s crude oil each day. Over 85% of the province’s GDP is generated by petroleum and natural gas production. Pekanbaru, the regional capital of Riau province, acts as the administrative center of the oil industry in the area.

The majority of native Riau islanders are farmers and active fishermen. About 62% are farmers growing and harvesting products from rubber, oil palm and gambir trees.



Population: 2.2 million
Location: Sumatra, Indonesia
Languages: Riau Malay, Bahasa Indonesia



a people loved



Pray for indigenous fellowships of Jesus-followers to spring up among the Riau Malay. May a movement sweep through this people group.

Pray for God to reveal himself in dreams and visions.

Almost 20,000 non-Riau followers of Jesus live in this province. **Pray** that local believers would have a vision to reach out to the Riau Malay.

Pray for followers of Jesus from other ethnic groups who have moved to the towns of Batam, Bengkalis, Tembilahan, Rengat, Kampar, Pekanbaru, Tanjung Pinang and the surrounding areas, that they will find opportunities to show God's love to the Riau Malay.

Pray for followers of Jesus who serve among the Riau Malay to develop an effective contextualized strategy for sharing Good News.

Pray for the literature that has been and will be produced for the Riau. May both readers and writers understand the requirements of Jesus.

Two of the most advanced Riau islands are Batam and Bintan, currently the focus of multi-million dollar investment opportunities. In 1989, the Singapore government proposed the linkage of Singapore, the Riau Islands and Johor (peninsular Malaysia's southernmost state) in a synergistic "Growth Triangle," a free-trade economic zone that would benefit all three areas. As Batam and Bintan continue to develop, industrial workers and employees in large tourist resorts are expected to outpace the number of farmers and fishermen. The greatest need at present is meaningful vocational training or work activities for youth, because a vast number of them are unemployed.

Culture

Riau province is proud of its historical role in the development of Malay culture. Most Riau Malay see themselves as open, friendly and accepting of newcomers. They feel this has been an important part of their historical tradition, as for centuries they have lived in cordial proximity to Bugis, Makasar, Chinese and Javanese peoples.

Beliefs

99.9% of the Riau Malay are Muslim. They have been taught from childhood that Islam is the only true religion for their people.

Local churches in general do not have a specific focus on reaching out to the Riau Malay. No books about Jesus are available in the Riau dialect. There are fewer than 60 known followers of Jesus among the 2.2 million Riau Malay people. Most of these few believers have been assimilated into traditional churches. As yet, there is no indigenous fellowship of followers of Jesus among the Riau Malay.