

### Who are the Minangkabau?

Around 7–8 million Minangkabau make up the fourth largest ethnic group in Indonesia and the largest people group on the island of Sumatra. About 4.5 million live in the Minang homeland of West Sumatra where they form over 95% of the population. The provincial capital, Padang, has around 800,000 inhabitants. Over the generations, the Minang have spread out from the highlands of West Sumatra across Indonesia. Today, millions live throughout the country, especially in large cities such as Jakarta, Bandung and Pekanbaru. A significant number can also be found in the Malaysian state of Negeri Sembilan and beyond.

### Languages

*Bahasa Indonesia*, the Indonesian national language, is widely used by the Minang, but in everyday conversation they usually prefer the Minang language, which is closely related to Indonesian and has several local dialects.

### Livelihood

In the Minangkabau homeland, agriculture is the main industry. West Sumatra's fertile soil produces rice as well as cash crops including palm oil, rubber, coffee and tea. Minang people are also well known for their business and trading ability and there are few places in Indonesia without some Minang presence. Perhaps most well known are traditional Minang restaurants, where *rendang*, beef cooked in coconut milk, is a popular choice. With West Sumatra's natural beauty, distinctive architecture and unique culture, tourism is also a growing part of the economy attracting both local and foreign visitors.

### Culture



The Minangkabau have rich cultural traditions including colourful wedding ceremonies and traditional dances.

Minang houses, with distinctive pointed roofs, are known throughout Southeast Asia. The Minangkabau are even more famous for the matrilineal structure of their society. Women play a significant role both in the family and in the community, something

that many visitors find surprising in a culture strongly influenced by Islam. With a tradition of leaving the homeland to seek knowledge, work and success, the influence of Minang culture has been felt across Indonesia in business, politics, religion, education and literature.

Family and community ties are very important to the Minang. On special occasions such as weddings, births, circumcisions or when pilgrims set off for Mecca, families and neighbours gather together to eat and celebrate. Women often enjoy attending neighbourhood women's groups and exercise classes, while men congregate in local coffee shops to chat. Although young people are influenced by outside cultures through television, music and the internet, family and faith still play a significant role in their lives.

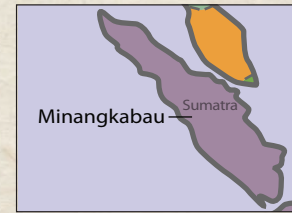
### Beliefs

The Minang are one of the most dedicated Muslim people groups in Indonesia. They faithfully practice the five pillars of Islam and many have made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Some Minang, afraid of Western secularising influences, are trying to encourage stricter codes of dress, behaviour and belief among the Minang. More and more women wear headscarves and an ability to recite the Qur'an in Arabic is a precondition for some jobs and educational opportunities. Recent major earthquake disasters, with predictions of a possible massive tsunami yet to occur, have also led to calls for increased religious devotion.



The Minang believe that "to be Minang is to be Muslim." Any who leave Islam are no longer considered to be Minang. This understanding has been a major challenge for those few Minang who have decided to follow a different path. Although by law there is freedom to change one's religion, in practice the influence of society makes this a very difficult step even to consider.

For more information about the Minang, visit: [www.apeopleloved.com/minangkabau](http://www.apeopleloved.com/minangkabau)



Population: 7–8 million  
Location: West Sumatra, Indonesia  
Languages: Minang  
Bahasa Indonesia

### Prayer Points

**Pray** for God to open the hearts and minds of the Minang to the Good News of God's grace and mercy.

**Pray** for the few Minang believers to be united and faithful witnesses among their own people group.

**Pray** for God to touch the hearts of believers from other Indonesian ethnic groups to reach out to their Minang neighbours and friends.

**Pray** for followers of Jesus serving among the Minang that they may be faithful to share the Good News and to support each other. Pray for more followers of Jesus to join them.

**Pray** that the seeds now being sown will one day lead to the growth of indigenous fellowships of Jesus-followers among this people group.