

# The Demographic Profile and Sustainability Growth of the Bidayuh Population of Sarawak

Lam Chee Kheung

Institute of Borneo Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia

Shahren Ahmad Zaidi Adruce

Institute of Borneo Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i14/5028>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i14/5028

**Published Date:** 23 December 2018

## Abstract

Bidayuh is one of the seven major ethnic communities in Sarawak Malaysia, whose population number ranks fourth among all the communities. The analysis and description of the quantity and quality of Bidayuh population give a clear pattern and trends of change of Bidayuh population for the last 60 years, from 1947 to 2010. The study shows that the number of Bidayuh has increased almost 5 times since 1947. This is demonstrated by the annual growth rate and the percentage increase of the Bidayuh population over these years. It is evidenced from the analysis that the Bidayuh population has experienced a slower annual growth in recent years; this pattern simultaneously reflects the positive improvement of the social and economic conditions of the community. Although the growth rate of the Bidayuh has fallen, its size will still grow in absolute number, and the total Bidayuh could reach 220,000 in 2020. In view of the decline of the Bidayuh population which is slower than the Iban, the Melanau, the Chinese, and the Others, the proportion and growth of Bidayuh population in Sarawak population is therefore still sustainable.

**Keywords:** Population, Sarawak Population, Demography, Bidayuh, Sustainability Population Growth

## Introduction

Bidayuh is one of the seven major ethnic groups<sup>1</sup> among the twenty-five specific ethnic groups in Sarawak (1970 Census: 2-3). Jackson (1968:41) remarked that, "Sarawak is considered as one of the most multi-racial states in the world in terms of its small population". The total population of Sarawak was 2,471,140 in 2010. And the seven major ethnic groups in Sarawak, in priority of number in 2010 are Iban, 713,421; Chinese, 577,646; Malay, 568,113; Bidayuh, 198,473; Orang Ulu, 156,436; Melanau, 123,410; and Others, 16,549 (Lam, 2014:151).

Historically the Bidayuh came from the western Kalimantan region of Indonesian Kalimantan of Borneo. They live along the Lundu, Sarawak, Sadong and Samarahan Rivers and exhibited wide cultural diversity among their various populations, dividing further into five mutually

different dialect groups, the two largest being in the Upper Sadong District (parts of Kuching district), and the others live in the Bau and Lundu districts, all in the First Division of Sarawak (Geddes,1954:6).

This paper aims at presenting demographic profile in terms of size, composition and distribution, compiled from the official population censuses<sup>2</sup> and vital statistics data, to describe the Bidayuh population of Sarawak for the last 60 years (1947-2010). It is hoped that it will reveal the pattern and trends of changes of the Bidayuh population over these years, when further studies are conducted, and the relationship of economic, social and cultural to these trends and differentials can be identified, thus explaining the sustainability of growth (ability to maintain a certain rate or level of growth) of the Bidayuh population.

### **The demographic profile of bidayuh of sarawak, 1947-2010.**

The demographic profile of a population denotes the size, which includes the number of people (males, females, children and adults), and the rate of birth, death, natural growth, external migration and total growth of people; the composition which is age/sex, ethnic, religious, social and economic grouping of people, and the distribution, which is urban, rural, mobility and internal migration (Hauser and Duncan.1959).

### **Population Size**

The total Bidayuh population of Sarawak was 198,473 in 2010, this number when compared with 42,195 in 1947 showed a net gain of 156,278 Bidayuhs, which was 4.7 times more than the number 60 years ago (Table 1, item 1, row 2).

The increase of Bidayuh population is the result of the surplus of births over deaths in the population (natural increase) in this given period.

The natural increase rate (NIR) of Bidayuh population was 18.3 in 1947 and 16.2 percent in 2010 (Table 1, item 5, rows 4 & 9). While the crude birth rate (CBR) of Bidayuh was averaged 30.3 per thousand in the 1950s and 20.0 in 2000s, a decline of 10.3 births (Table 1, item 3, rows 4 & 10), and the crude death rate (CDR) declined 8.2 deaths per thousand population, from 12 to 3.8 per thousand or 68 percent from 1950s to 2000s (Table 1, item 4, rows 4 & 10).

The annual growth rate of Bidayuh was 2.4 percent between 1947 and 1960, and 1991, and 2010 (Table 1, item 6, row 6).

Table 1

*Bidayuh: Population Size (percent increase, birth rate, death rate natural increase, annual growth, percent to Sarawak population)*

	Year	1947	1960	1970	1980	1991	2000	2010	Diff. btw. 1947 & 2010
1	Total Bidayuh	42,195	57,619	83,612	104,918	135,595	166,756	198,473	156,279
2	% increase		36.6	45.1	25.5	29.2	23.0	19.0	17.6
3	Ave. Birth rate <sup>3</sup>		30.3	40.9	36.3	29.7	27.0	20.0	-10.3
4	Ave. Death rate <sup>4</sup>		12.0	7.7	9.6	3.7	3.9	3.8	-8.2
5	Natural increase(%) <sup>5</sup>		18.3	33.2	26.7	26.0	23.1	16.2	-2.1
6	Ave.annual growth rate(%) <sup>6</sup>		2.4	3.7	2.3	2.9	2.3	1.7	-0.7
7	% to S'wak population	7.7	7.7	8.5	8.2	8.3	8.1	8.0	+0.3

Sources: Lam, 2014, Tables 4.1: 18, 4.3:19, Appendix 01:151, and Appendix 4.1:157-158

**The composition** (age, sex, dependency ratio, literacy rate and economic by industries)

### Broad Age Group

The age composition which is categorized into three functional groupings give meaningful explanations as follows: the 0-14 years group, which denotes the burden of high fertility to be borne most heavily by parents and the government; the 15-64 years group, which constitutes the mature population characterized by being out of school and in the labor force; and the 65 years and over age group which is the old age population requiring family and government assistance.

The levels and trends of the Bidayuh population by broad age group in Table 2 show that 42.8 percent of the Bidayuh were in the 0 to 14 age group, 54.8 percent in the 15 to 64 age group, and 2.4 percent in the 65 and over age group in 1947. The proportion of the corresponding age groups of the Bidayuh population in 2010 shows a lower number of people in the younger age group, 29.8 percent; a higher number in the matured age group, 64.4 percent; and the older age group, 5.8 percent. In fact, the matured Bidayuh population has remained quite consistently high over these years since 1991, perhaps an increase in the older age group as well (Table 2, item 1, row 2,3,4, col.3,7,9).

### Dependency Ratio

Dependency Ratio implies the number of the young (below 14) and old (above 65) people whom one hundred working adults (15-64 years) have to support in a population. The dependency ratio of the Bidayuh was 82.5, in 1947, 94.2 in 1960, it declined to 55.0 in 2010 (Table 2, item 2, row 5, col. 3, 4,9). The dependency ratio was indeed high among the Bidayuh in the earlier years, especially in the 1960s. However, the dependency ratio has since declined in the most recent years; 55 per hundred in 2010 is quite significant.

**Overall Sex-Ratio**

The overall sex-ratio of a population refers to the numbers of females per thousand males in a population. In the Bidayuh population, there were 1.01 females to every male in 1947. The pattern of more females than males in the Bidayuh population has been persistent for over 50 years. However, the sex-ratio of Bidayuh population had changed from 2000 when there was a reversed pattern of more males than females, and this pattern continued in 2010 when the sex-ratio was 0.99 and 0.97 females to every male respectively (Table2, item 3, row 6, col.3,4,8,9). This was a normal sex composition, which was not supposed to constraint availability of marriage among Bidayuh men and women in Sarawak in recent years.

**Literacy Rate**

Literacy rate refers to the percentage of people who have attended schools and are able to read and write letter at the age of 15 and above in a population. The literacy rate of the Bidayuh was extremely low in the early years. There were only slightly more than 7 out of every 100 Bidayuh who were literate in 1947. However, the literacy rate among the Bidayuh had improved significantly since 1991, it was 68 per 100 in 1991; 75.3 in 2000 and 84.2 in 2010 (Table 2, item 4, row 7,col.3,7,8,9). Bidayuh's current literacy rate is approaching to universal literacy standard.

**Economic by Industry**

In 1947, almost 99 percent of the Bidayuh were engaged in agriculture. The percentage decreased very slowly to 96 percent in 1960, 80 percent in 1970, 72 percent in 1980, 57 percent in 1991, 38 percent in 2000, and 25 percent in 2010. A deduction of 74 percent over the last 60 years is significant; the proportion of Bidayuh involved in agriculture is much less now than before. The major shift of economic activities among the Bidayuh has been to the service industries, almost half of the employed Bidayuh are now working in the service sectors (Table 2, item 5, row 8,9,10,11).

Table 2

*Bidayuh: Population Composition (age, sex, dependency, literacy & economic by industries, 1947-2010*

	Year	1947	1960	1970	1980	1991	2000	2010
1 Age group:	0-14	42.8	46.7	50.6	45.6	38.6	36.1	29.8
	15-64	54.8	51.5	47.6	51.8	57.9	59.7	64.4
	65+	2.4	1.8	1.9	2.6	3.5	4.2	5.8
2 Dependency Ratio <sup>7</sup> :		82.5	94.2	110.2	93.1	72.8	67.7	55.0
3 Sex ratio(f:m)		1:099	1:097	1:099	1:098	1:098	1:1.01	1:1.03
4 Literacy rate(%)		7.3	7.4	22.5	46.8	68.0	75.3	84.2
5 Eco. by industry(%)	agriculture	98.7	95.7	79.5	72.1	56.9	37.8	24.6
	'M' sector	0.1	0.9	1.5	3.5	17.3	11.4	23.0
	'S' scetor	1.2	0.6	7.3	19.3	25.7	50.6	47.1
	I.N.A.D	-	2.8	11.7	5.1	0.1	0.2	5.3

Sources: Lam, 2014, Table 4.4:20, Table 4.5:21, Table 4.6:22, Table 4.7:30, Table 4.8:31,

### Religion

In terms of religion in 2010, statistics show that 81.4 percent of the Bidayuh in Sarawak are Christians, 11.6 percent Confucianism, Taoism and tribal/folk/other traditional Chinese religion, and a small percentage of other religions (Table 3).

In examining the pattern and trends of the two main religions of the Bidayuh, Tribal (under other religions) and Christianity, it is noted that the Bidayuh were exclusively believers in tribal religion in the early years, which was 91 percent in 1947, and 73 percent in 1960. Christianity was endorsed by the Bidayuh in a larger number as from 1970, when 47 percent of the Bidayuh became Christians. The number of Christians among the Bidayuh increased subsequently to 69 percent in 1980, 87 percent in 1991, 91 percent in 2000, and 81.4 percent in 2010. The influence of Christianity on Bidayuh was tremendously and significantly great; now over eight out of ten Bidayuh are Christians. This is contrary to the fact that nine out of ten Bidayuh were believers in tribal religion 60 years ago.

Table 3

*Bidayuh Religion Grouping in Sarawak, 1947- 2010.*

Year	Islam	Christianity	Tribal	Confucianism	Hinduism	Buddhism	Other Religion	No Religion	Unknown	Total
1947	43 (0.1)	3,596 (8.5)	-	-	-	-	38,556 (91.4)	-	-	42,195 (100.0)
1960	59 (0.1)	15,536 (27.0)	-	-	-	-	42,024 (72.9)	-	-	57,619 (100.0)

1970	170 (0.2)	39,203 (47.1)	-	-	-	187 (0.2)	35,930 (43.1)	7,823 (9.4)	-	83,313 (100.0)
1980	855 (0.8)	72,520 (69.1)	22,565 (21.5)	186 (0.2)	18 (-)	202 (0.2)	2,939 (2.8)	5,600 (5.4)	-	104,885 (100.0)
1991 /	2,474 (1.9)	118,309 (87.3)	8,794 (6.5)	313 (0.2)	62 (0.1)	453 (0.3)	2,300 (1.7)	2,719 (2.0)	33 (-)	135,457 (100.0)
2000	4,405 (2.6)	151,974 (91.1)	4,238 (2.5)	225 (0.1)	48 (-)	946 (0.6)	2,844 (1.7)	1,174 (0.7)	902 (0.7)	166,756 (100.0)
2010	4,738 (2.4)	161,617 (81.4)	-	23,024 (11.6)	116 (0.06)	1,136 (0.6)	6,763 (3.4)	1,079 (0.6)	-	198,473 (100.0)

Source: Lam, 2014, Table 4.9:33

### The distribution

#### Urban/rural

Bidayuh were predominantly rural dwellers, and urban<sup>3</sup>growth of Bidayuh was very slow. In 1947, over 99 percent of the Bidayuh lived in rural areas, in 1960, 98.6 percent, in 1970, 97.5 percent and in 1980, 92.7 percent. Although the proportion of Bidayuh urban dwellers increased faster in 1991 and also steadily increased in 2000 and 2010, the proportions of Bidayuh living in rural areas were still large, which were 81 percent in 1991, 75 percent in 2000 and 70 percent in 2010 (Table 4). Nevertheless, the proportion of urbanized Bidayuh in 2010 when compared to that of 1947's is 51 times larger.

Table 4

*Bidayuh: Population Distribution (urban & rural)*

	Year	1947	1960	1970	1980	1991	2000	2010
1	Urban <sup>10</sup>	0.6	1.4	2.5	7.3	19.0	25.3	30.3
	Rural	99.4	98.6	97.5	92.7	81.0	74.7	69.7

Sources: Lam, 2014, Table 4.10:35

### Districts with large Bidayuh population

Bidayuh live entirely in four districts of the Kuching Samarahan Division: Padawan (formerly Kuching rural), Serian, Bau and Lundu (Table 5). All the four districts have comparatively easy communication with Kuching, the capital of Sarawak.

The patterns of distribution of Bidayuh show that Bidayuh settlements, in terms of geographical locations in Sarawak have changed little for the last 60 years. It is apparent that the increases of Bidayuh over these years are all confined to these same areas. The pattern of distribution of Bidayuh was further confirmed by Walker (2002:17), who in his study

expressed that Bidayuh did not involve in expansionary activity and they would contain their settlements to familiar areas.

Table 5

*Bidayuh Population of Some Districts with Large Bidayuh Population, 1947- 2010*

Division and District	Population						
	1947	1960	1970	1980	1991/	2000	2010
Serian	17,674 (41.9)	23,102 (40.1)	32,229 (38.5)	38,570 (36.8)	42,851 (31.6)	49,117 (29.5)	54,221 (27.3)
Kuching	11,837 (28.1)	16,151 (28.0)	23,145 (27.7)	30,212(MDLB) 3,969(MP) (32.6)	50,147 (37.0)	63,943 (38.3)	76,403 (38.5)
Bau	9,525 (22.8)	13,057 (22.7)	18,508 (22.1)	20,605 (19.6)	23,413 (17.3)	29,215 (17.5)	37,328 (18.8)
Lundu	2,812 (6.7)	4,035 (7.0)	6,348 (7.6)	8,235 (7..9)	9,278 (6.8)	10,717 (6.4)	12,034 (6.1)
Samarahan					1,538 (1.1)	3,138 (1.9)	5,957 (3.0)
Miri				1,074 (1.0)	2,753 (2.0)	3,692 (2.2)	3,865 (2.0)
Total Bidayuh Population	42,195 (100.0)	57,619 (100.0)	83,612 (100.0)	104,916 (100.0)	135,595 (100.0)	166,759 (100.0)	198,473 (100.0)

Source: Lam, 2014, Table 4.11:38

### Projection of Bidayuh population in 2020

It is difficult to predict with precision future population trends of the Bidayuh. However, based on past pattern and trends, it is reasonable to expect the annual growth rate to be consistent at 1.7 percent for the next 10 years. The Bidayuh population would reach about 220,000 in 2020.

### Discussion

The results of an analysis of demographic variables of the Bidayuh group from the 1947 to 2010 population census reports and the statistics on births and deaths registration show the following pattern and trends of the Bidayuh population over these years.

The size of the Bidayuh population becomes larger with an increase of 156,279 peoples over the last sixty years; but it had experienced a slower annual growth since 1970, and the slower growth was particularly notable in the 2000s. The effects were observed from the decrease of CBR and the lower rate of natural increase. Nevertheless, the average annual growth rate of the Bidayuh population increased 0.9 percent, and the proportion of its population to the total Sarawak population had increased 0.3 percent over these years.

The composition of the Bidayuh population shows that Bidayuh is a matured age population, with a larger proportion in the 15-64 age group over a fewer younger and a small increases in the older age groups. The dependency ratio at 55 per hundred in 2010, reflecting lesser



burden for the working Bidayuh to support their young and old family members are commendable. The sex-ratio of 1.01 or 1.03 Bidayuh males to every female in the Bidayuh population in the recent years was a normal sex composition. The proportion of literate Bidayuh achieved 84.2 percent in 2010 was a significant improvement. There was a great shift of economic undertaking of the Bidayuh from agriculture, 99 percent in 1947 against 25 percent in 2010, to service and manufacture sectors in recent years. The majority of the Bidayuh, over 81 percent of them are Christians in 2010 which was a sharp contrast to 9 percent in 1947.

The distribution of Bidayuh shows 70 percent of the Bidayuh still live in rural areas in 2010. They, however, live in large numbers in the Padawan, Bau and Lundu districts which are in close proximity of Kuching City, the capital of Sarawak. They have benefited from the intensive economic development in the commerce, service, infrastructure and light industrial sectors in the recent years. The pattern and trends of distribution of the Bidayuh by geographical areas confirm that the movement of the Bidayuh was not frequent, because 94 percent of them in 2010 still lived in Kuching Samarahan Division (formerly First Division) of Sarawak.

### Conclusion

The study finds the pattern and trends of the Bidayuh population of Sarawak are quite different from the past; and the determinants of economic, social and culture influencing such changes are apparent. Further research on the effects of these components, and even a comparative study with other ethnic groups of the same could be conducted for better understanding of a complete demographic picture of Sarawak. Understanding the profile and pattern of growth will enable future researchers to chart out strategic plan to ensure the ability to maintain the sustainability of the population growth of this ethnic group.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Ethnic groups. Ethnic classifications were made in 1991 to produce an integrated set of ethnic groupings at the national level. In Sarawak, Malaysian citizens are classified into Malays, Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Other Bumiputera (Orang Ulu), Chinese and Others.

<sup>2</sup>Population censuses are the reliable sources for obtaining estimates of the size, composition, and distribution of a population. A census is normally taken in every 10 years. The first official census in Sarawak was taken in 1947, followed by 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991, 2000, and the most recent one in 2010.

<sup>3</sup>Urban areas are defined as gazetted local authority areas with a specified population threshold. In the 1970 and 1980 Population and Housing Censuses, the criterion for a gazette area to be classified as urban was that it should have a population of 10,000 persons or more. This definition continued to be used, but to include the gazette areas with their adjoining built-up areas which had a combined population of 10,000 or more at the time of the census in the ensuing censuses.

### Corresponding Author

Shahren Ahmad Zaidi Adruce, Institute of Borneo Studies, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia, Email: azshahren@unimas.my

### References

Geddes, W.R. (1954). *The Land Dayaks of Sarawak: A Report on the Social Economic Survey*



- of the Land Dayaks of Sarawak* Presented to the Colonial Social Science Research Council, Colonial Research Studies, 14, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London.
- Hauser, P.M & Duncan, O.D. (1959). *The Study of Population: an Inventory and Appraisal*, University Press, Chicago.
- Jackson, J.C. (1968). *Sarawak-A Geographical Survey of a Developing State*, University of London Press Ltd. p.41.
- Lam, C. K. (2014). *Pattern and Trends of the Bidayuh, Orang Ulu and Melanau Population of Sarawak, 1947-2010*. Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak.
- Leete, R. (1996). *Malaysia's demographic Transition-Rapid Development, Culture, and Politics*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur
- Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia (1972). *1970 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, Community Groups*. Kuala Lumpur
- Walker, J.H. (2002). *Power and Prowess. The Origins of Brooke Kinship in Sarawak*. Asian Studies Association of Australia. Allen & Unwin and University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.