The Sultanate of Brunei Darussalam has a population of 323,600. Slightly over two-thirds of the population is Muslim, the majority of which are Sunni Muslims who follow the Shafi'i madhab. Other ethnic Malay groups include, amongst others, the Muros and Dusuns, most of whom practice animism and shamanism — although a few have converted to Christianity and Islam. Ethnic Chinese community account for 15% of the population and generally adhere to Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, or to Christianity, a handful having converted to Islam.

The 1991 census indicated that 67% of the population of Brunei Darussalam identified themselves as Muslims, 17% Buddhists, 11% Christians, and the remaining 10% as other (including free-thinkers, Hindus, Sikhs, Bahais, or undeclared). Although Islam is the official religion, religious minorities have the right to observe their religious values and traditions. In this regard, the Constitution of the State of Brunei (1959) holds that the religion of the State shall be the Muslim religion, provided that all other religions may be practised in peace and harmony by the persons professing them in any part of the State.

Islamic values, traditions and ethics have been incorporated and manifested within Brunei culture, society and politics. The concept of the MB (Melayu Bersenjan or Malay Muslim Monarchy) has been the cornerstone of the religio-political philosophy of Brunei, which stresses the importance of maintaining the Malay race, language, culture and Muslim religion of the nation.

The significance of the MB concept was affirmed during the reign of Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddin (1950-1967), when it became officially recognized in the 1959 Brunei Constitution, and even more so upon Brunei's declaration of independence on 1 January 1984. On this occasion, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah asserted that Brunei Darussalam would be ‘forever a sovereign, democratic and independent Malay Muslim Monarchy’ (founded) upon the teaching of Islam according to Abu al-Sunnah wa al-Jamah and [...] the principle of liberty, trust and justice.'

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