



Jose Matheus

**Location:** More than one million Mizo people live throughout the world today, with the large majority found in the northeast Indian state of Mizoram. In western Myanmar's Chin State, an estimated 19,000 Mizo people dwell in Falam, Tedim, and Tonzang townships near the Indian border. An additional 50,000 Mizo people have migrated to the United States since the first families studied theology there in the 1960s. Today, thriving Mizo communities are found in the Indianapolis, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C. areas. Significant Mizo populations also live in Singapore and Malaysia.

**Identity:** Identifying Mizo people in Myanmar is complex, because many of the more than 50 Chin tribes in western Myanmar use the qualifier "zo" in their ethnic name. "Mizo" simply means "Zo people," while the Indian state of Mizoram means "land of the Zo people." During the British colonial period, the tribal and language name of this group was listed as Lushai, stemming from one of their founding fathers, Lusei. The Mizo have long been recognized in Myanmar, with the 1931 census returning a population of 5,059.

**Language:** The Mizo language is spoken across a widespread area and serves as the *lingua franca* for many other small tribes in the region. The Mizo in Myanmar are highly educated. They are bilingual in Burmese, and many also speak fluent English. The Mizo believe they lost a sacred

book that was given to their forefathers by the creator.<sup>1</sup>

**History:** According to oral history, the Mizo were based in today's Shan State before migrating west to the Myanmar-India border area. One scholar dates the start of the migration to 1463.<sup>2</sup> Over the ensuing centuries, "the Mizo did not reject other people who came into contact with them, and many were absorbed and now form the bulk of the Mizoram population."<sup>3</sup> Generations of conflict saw the Mizo pushed across the Tiau River into today's India, where "they were constantly pursued by powerful eastern tribes who demanded tribute. To withstand the eastern tribes, in 1740 a number of subtribes combined into one village, Selesih. Even then, the eastern tribes came to collect tribute from the Mizo, who gave up their treasures of Burmese gongs, brass bells, *mithun*, and ornaments."<sup>4</sup>

**Customs:** The unique appearance and headdress of Mizo women has changed little over many generations. An early 20th century description says: "A picturesque headdress worn by girls consists of a chaplet made of brass and colored cane, into which are inserted porcupine quills, and to the upper ends of these are fixed the green wing-feathers of the common parrot, tipped with tufts of red wool."<sup>5</sup> Some scholars are unimpressed by cultural changes wrought by the Mizo's mass conversion to Christianity,

with one lamenting, "Being Christian meant the ruination of all knowledge of authentic Mizo folklore, songs, and even Mizo ways of eating and drinking. It is ridiculous for a Mizo not to know anything about their culture."<sup>6</sup>

**Religion:** Since time immemorial, the Mizo "believed in a spirit called Pathian, who is supposed to be the creator of everything but had little concern with men. Far more important were the numerous *huai*, or demons, who inhabited every stream, mountain, and forest, and to whom every illness and misfortune was attributed.... A Mizo's whole life was spent propitiating these spirits."<sup>7</sup> The 1931 census of Burma returned just 5.8% of Mizo people as Christians, with the rest animists. That percentage radically increased as Mizo evangelists crossed into Myanmar, spreading revival wherever they went.

**Christianity:** Beginning in 1906, a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit swept practically the entire Mizo population in India into the kingdom of God, although the initial breakthrough resulted in strong persecution by heathen chiefs. In Myanmar practically all Mizo people today are Christians, while on the Indian side of the border a staggering 98.5% of Mizo people declared themselves Christians in 2011. The Mizo Bible has been in circulation since 1959,<sup>8</sup> and Mizo churches have sent hundreds of missionaries all over Asia.



Population in Myanmar:  
19,000 (2025)

Location:  
Chin State

Language Family:  
Tibeto-Burman

Main Religion:  
Christianity (95.0%)

Christians:  
18,050 (95.0%)

## OVERVIEW

Population:  
19,000 in Myanmar  
(2025 Joshua Project)  
12,500 (1983 census)  
5,059 (1931 census)

Other Countries:  
938,400 in India  
50,000 in USA  
20,000 in Singapore  
3,000 in Malaysia  
380 in Bangladesh

Other Names:  
Chin Mizo, Ka-Lin-Kaw, Kyaw, Le, Lusai, Lushai, Lushei

Location:  
Chin State: Falam, Tedim and Tonzang townships in Falam District

Language:  
Chin Mizo [lus]

Dialects:

Scripture:  
Bible 1959  
New Testament 1916  
Portions 1898

Jesus film:  
Mizo

Global Recordings:  
Mizo #6170

People ID: 13161

