

Indonesia: The 2024 Elections and Key Power Players

Indonesia’s ever-changing constellations of political parties and politicians are gearing up for the 2024 elections, which will see voters go to polling booths to elect a new president, members of Parliament, and local legislative representatives. To conclude our series exploring the Southeast Asia region, we take a look at the political landscape leading up to the 2024 presidential elections in the world’s fourth most populous country.

A Celebration of Democracy

Indonesia’s presidential elections are among the biggest of its kind globally – up to 203 million registered voters will vote directly for their head of state. It’s dubbed *Pesta Demokrasi*, or the Festival of Democracy, in celebration of the citizenry’s rights to determine the country’s direction.

Like many of its regional neighbours, elections in Indonesia are strongly driven by personalities rather than platforms or policies. While political parties can play a secondary role to individual politicians at the voting booth, party support is key to getting a seat at the table.

Structuring Indonesia’s Presidential Elections

In order for a political party or a coalition of parties to nominate a presidential candidate in 2024, the party/coalition must hold at least 20% of Parliamentary seats or have secured at least 25% of the popular vote in the 2019 elections. The following parties and coalitions meet this condition and have thrown their support behind a candidate: PDI-P (joined by PPP), Gerindra + PKB, NasDem + Partai Demokrat + PKS.

A candidate must secure at least 50% of the popular vote to win outright. If no candidate succeeds in this, the vote goes to a runoff where the top two contestants in the first round will stand against each other.

Fast Facts – Indonesia



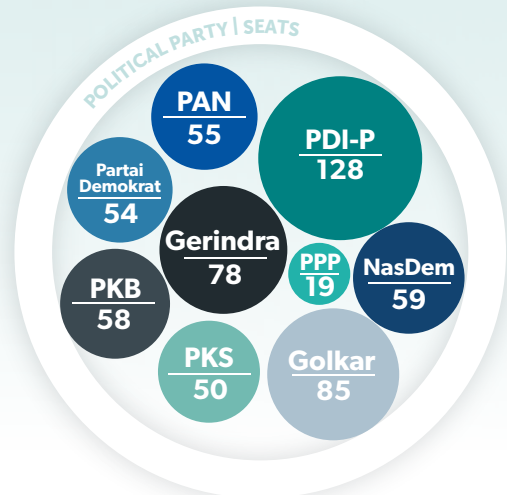
Government Type:
Republic, Presidential system

Population
273.8 M

GDP Per Capita
USD **4,332**

Parliamentary (DPR) Composition

(by political party, from the 2019 elections)



Meet The Candidates

The three main contenders in the 2024 elections include some familiar faces.

Prabowo Subianto



**Minister for Defense
(2019 – present)**

Contested the presidency in 2014 and 2019

Retired general and former commander of the Indonesian Special Forces

Ganjar Pranowo



**Governor of Central Java
(2013 – present)**

Former DPR legislator from 2004

Known for populist policies and a similar style to Jokowi

Anies Baswedan



**Governor of Jakarta
(2017 – 2022)**

**Minister for Education
(2014 – 2016)**

A former Jokowi ally turned opposition leader

Former Rector of Paramadina University

Prabowo Subianto

This will be Prabowo's third and possibly final tilt at the Presidency after two unsuccessful runs against Jokowi, and he stands a better chance this time around with the incumbent unable to contest. He also benefits from the halo cast by Jokowi; Jokowi brought Prabowo into his cabinet to help mend fences after the 2019 elections and in an illustration of the old adage about no permanent enemies, the two former rivals have become allies. In recent months, Prabowo has pulled ahead of his two rivals in most surveys and as of June 2023 is the front-runner in the elections. Intriguingly, support for Prabowo has increased the most among the youth/ under-25s,¹ possibly because younger voters have no direct recollection of the allegations of human rights abuses that surrounded Prabowo's leadership of the special forces. It is unclear what a Prabowo presidency would look like; while he has shown a preference for a more centralized and authoritarian style of leadership in the past, he has softened his approach and taken a more conciliatory tone in recent months.

Ganjar Pranowo

While Prabowo will be a formidable challenger in 2024, Ganjar holds the advantage of the support of the largest political party in Parliament, PDI-P. As PDI-P's candidate, he has the party machinery behind him and is seen as a natural successor to Jokowi. Ganjar is therefore the candidate for continuity. He bears notable similarities to Jokowi – both come from humble origins and do not belong to the political elite; they share a fondness for *blusukan* (casual walkabouts) and had success in regional politics. Yet, he is more of a party stalwart than Jokowi. While Jokowi built his support base and reputation independently of PDI-P before entering the party fold, Ganjar has spent his entire political career as a member of the party and is more inclined to toe the party line, especially given his hard-won nomination from the party in April 2023. Ganjar is currently polling behind Prabowo but ahead of Anies, but much could change in the months ahead.

Anies Baswedan

Anies, who comes from a background in academia but has spent the past decade in politics, is the laggard among the three but should not be ruled out. A spokesperson for Jokowi's first presidential campaign and a cabinet minister for two years, he fell afoul of the President during the Jakarta gubernatorial elections in 2017 when he ran against Ahok, Jokowi's former deputy and close friend.² Anies appeals to voters who are dissatisfied with Jokowi but in order to have a real shot at the Presidency, he will have to broaden his appeal beyond Islamists and be more than just an anti-establishment candidate.

The Kingmaker(s)

With his popularity ratings at an all-time high,³ Jokowi looms large as a potential kingmaker in the 2024 elections. He has shown no interest in quietly slipping away into retirement and has sent mixed signals about which candidate (between Prabowo and Ganjar) has his support. This is a strategic decision; Jokowi may be keeping his cards close to his chest in order to extract as many concessions as possible out of the two candidates before openly declaring his support for one of the two contestants. Jokowi's foremost concern is the preservation of his legacy; his primary achievement is moving Indonesia's capital to Kalimantan, which is still in its early stages, and he will want to ensure that this vision is properly executed by whoever succeeds him. His family's political fortunes form a second part of his legacy as both of his sons enter the political arena.

Key Dates

April 24, 2023

Registration opens for regional and national legislative elections

October 19, 2023

Registration opens for Presidential & VP candidates

November 25, 2023

Deadline for registration of all election candidates

Nov 28, 2023 – Feb 10, 2024

Campaign period

February 14, 2024

(First round) presidential and national legislative elections

June 26, 2024

(Second round) presidential election (if no candidate wins 50% of the popular vote in the first round)

November 27, 2024

Regional elections for governors and regents/ mayors

While Jokowi signalled his support for Ganjar from 2022, there are rumours that he has cooled on his early choice and is now leaning towards Prabowo because his efforts to shape Ganjar's campaign have been rebuffed by PDI-P leadership. If the presidential election goes to a second round, as appears likely at this point in time, Jokowi's support could be the deciding factor between the two frontrunners.

A second influencer in the 2024 elections is PDI-P chairperson and founder, Megawati Sukarnoputri. As party chief, she is the ultimate decision-maker

in Indonesia's largest political party. Megawati has already pulled on strings in the decision to name Ganjar as PDI-P's candidate; there are reports that in exchange for the party's official endorsement, Ganjar agreed to leave the decisions on his running mate and cabinet ministers to PDI-P. A former president (and daughter of Indonesia's first president) herself, Megawati's ambitions for her daughter Puan Maharani are no secret. However, neither Megawati or Puan have ever been popular with the electorate⁴ and their efforts to shape Ganjar's campaign could come at a cost if he becomes seen as a mere puppet.

To Be Determined: The Running Mates, and Why They Matter

While the main candidates for the presidency have made their interest clear, what remains to be seen is who each of the three will have as their running mate. Past elections have shown the importance of this choice, which provides the opportunity for a candidate to broaden his/her voter base significantly and address any perceived shortcomings. Examples of successful past pairings include a Javanese presidential candidate with a non-Javanese VP (SBY/ Jusuf Kalla, Jokowi/ Jusuf Kalla) and a more secular/ nationalist President with a VP that has religious credentials (Jokowi/ Ma'ruf Amin). In a tight runoff between two competitors, the choice of a VP candidate could be key.

Several names have been floated as potential VP candidates, but nothing has been confirmed. At the moment, the potential candidates generating the most interest include Erick Thohir, the Minister for State-Owned Enterprises and a member of one of Indonesia's most prominent business families, and Sandiaga Uno, another businessman-turned-politician who shared a ticket with Prabowo in 2019. Both Erick and Sandiaga tick multiple boxes: they present a more international/ media-savvy front than the two presidential frontrunners, both have their own wealth to draw

upon for the campaigns and have extensive business experience to complement the candidates' political nous, and both could claim partial non-Javanese heritage.

Other names being tossed about as potential VP candidates include Golkar Chairperson Airlangga Hartanto, East Java governor Khofifah, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Mahfud MD, West Java Governor Ridwan Kamil, and Partai Demokrat chair AHY. Each brings their own strengths to the table and the coming months will see who will be running mates to the main stars.

A week is a long time in politics and with five months to go before Indonesians head to the polls, a lot can change. With this in mind, we pose the following questions:

- Will Jokowi defy his party by supporting Prabowo?
- Who will be Indonesia's next president and what will their presidency achieve?

Notes

- 1 <https://indikator.co.id/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/RILIS-INDIKATOR-18-MEI-2023.pdf>
- 2 In his campaign against Ahok, Anies aligned himself with Islamist groups that spearheaded opposition to the former governor of Jakarta; Ahok was subsequently found guilty of blasphemy and imprisoned.
- 3 Jokowi's approval rating in May 2023 stood at 82%
- 4 Megawati was not directly elected to the Presidency; she was the Vice President to the cleric Gus Dur, who was impeached midway through his term.

Did **you** know?

The population of Java is equivalent to that of Russia. Java has 7% of Indonesia's total land area but is home to 145 million people, or over 50% of the total population.



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