



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Elections in Indonesia

2020 Regional Head Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Asia-Pacific

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

| | |
|--|---|
| When is Election Day?..... | 1 |
| Why are these elections important? | 1 |
| Who are citizens voting for on Election Day? | 1 |
| Who can vote in these elections? | 1 |
| What new legal frameworks were introduced for holding elections during the COVID-19 pandemic? | 2 |
| What are the election management bodies? What are their powers?..... | 2 |
| What measures are in place to safeguard the elections and voters during the COVID-19 pandemic? | 3 |
| How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots? | 4 |
| What provisions are in place to assist voters with disabilities during the pandemic? | 4 |
| Is out-of-country voting allowed? | 4 |
| Which electoral system will be used in these elections? | 4 |
| Who is eligible to compete in these elections? | 5 |
| Are there any provisions to support the participation of women and minorities? | 5 |
| What is the structure of the ballots? | 6 |
| What is the term of office for regional heads? | 6 |
| What technology will be used? | 6 |
| What is the election management body doing to strengthen its technology and procedures to resist vulnerabilities and counter foreign interference? | 7 |
| Where are vote counting and tabulation held?..... | 7 |
| Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation? | 7 |
| When will official results be announced? | 8 |
| How will election disputes be adjudicated?..... | 8 |
| What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits? | 8 |
| Resources | 9 |
| About IFES in Indonesia | 9 |
| Disclosure..... | 9 |

When is Election Day?

Elections for governors, mayors and regents, also known as regional head elections, will take place on December 9, 2020. Voting at 298,938 polling stations across 309 regencies in 32 provinces will start at 7:00 a.m. and end at 1:00 p.m. local time and will be staffed by 2,092,566 poll workers.¹

Why are these elections important?

Considering the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government is hoping the 270 regional heads elected will be able to implement strategic initiatives in their respective regions to respond to and recover from the pandemic. As it will be the last wave of concurrent regional head elections before the 2024 national election, this election is viewed as an investment in establishing support for political parties in the regions ahead of the next general election.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

This is the fourth regional head election since Indonesia began to gradually implement concurrent regional elections in 2015. The 2020 regional head election will be the last wave of concurrent regional head elections before a nationwide simultaneous regional head election is conducted in 2024.² On Election Day, voters will elect nine governors, 37 mayors and 224 regents across 270 regional jurisdictions in Indonesia. There are 739 candidate pairs competing for these seats, including 25 in gubernatorial, 101 in mayoral and 613 in regent races. A total of 100,359,152 Indonesians (50,164,426 men and 50,194,726 women), or approximately 53 percent of the national electorate, are registered to vote, including 3,517,256 first-time voters.

Who can vote in these elections?

According to Law No. 10/2016 on regional head elections, a person is eligible to vote if he or she is:

- An Indonesian citizen;
- At least 17 years old on Election Day, although residents younger than 17 may vote if they are or have been married;³
- Enrolled in the voter registry;
- A citizen whose voting rights have not been revoked by a court;

¹ The law limits the number of voters allocated to each polling station at 800. During the pandemic, electoral management bodies have allowed a maximum of 500 voters at each polling station to reduce crowding and potential transmission of COVID-19.

² Direct elections for local government executives have been held since 2005. Although popular with the electorate, political challenges have arisen, aiming to rescind direct elections in favor of indirect elections where local parliaments would choose the heads of local government. In 2014, the House of Representatives passed a bill moving from direct to indirect local elections. Civil society was active in defending direct local elections, and, in a popular decision, then-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono intervened to override the bill. This led to a decision to gradually implement concurrent regional head elections until 2024, when all regional head elections will be held simultaneously in the same year as the presidential and legislative elections.

³ Law 1/74 states that marriage is allowed only if the man is at least 19 and the woman is at least 16 years old. Deviation from this requirement can be made if the parents of the bride or groom ask for a dispensation from the court (Article 7 (1 and 2)).

- A resident of a region holding elections, as verified by a national electronic identification (ID) card; and
- Not an active member of the military or police.

Leading up to the election, the Ministry of Home Affairs stated that approximately 2 percent of eligible Indonesians have not yet been recorded in the national ID system. In the 2020 regional head elections, voters must present their electronic ID cards or statement letters issued by the civil registry office at their registered polling stations. Registered voters, such as first-time voters, who have not yet received their electronic ID cards can also use statement letters from the civil registry office. Voters who are not on the voter list may still cast their vote between noon and 1 p.m. if they present their electronic ID card, proving that they reside in the vicinity, and if unused ballots are available at the polling station.

What new legal frameworks were introduced for holding elections during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Based on the regional head election law, regional head elections were originally scheduled for September 23, 2020. However, due to the pandemic, Indonesia's government declared a health emergency, and the General Election Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum* – KPU) issued a decree halting all ongoing election activities starting on February 29, 2020. During a meeting on March 30, the House of Representatives (DPR), Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and election management bodies (EMBs) decided to postpone the election preparation stages, as well as the Election Day, through a Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Perppu). The president signed the Perppu on May 4, 2020, following an agreement between MoHA, KPU and DPR to postpone the election date to December 9, 2020. In July, the Perppu was ratified as Law No. 6/ 2020.

With the Perppu as the basis, the KPU issued regulation No. 6/2020 on “The Implementation of the Recommended Concurrent Elections for Governors and Vice Governors, Regents and Vice Regents, and/or Mayors and Vice Mayors During Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Non-Natural Disaster,” allowing Indonesian EMBs to begin to conduct the various election stages. This regulation has been revised several times to adjust to the pandemic in Indonesia and to accommodate input from stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, on the conduct of the election during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What are the election management bodies? What are their powers?

The General Election Commission (KPU) is the independent election management body responsible for the conduct of national and regional elections in Indonesia. The KPU consists of seven commissioners at the national level, including a chief election commissioner, identified through a rigid selection process and then inaugurated by the president for a five-year term in April 2017. The KPU Secretariat, led by the secretary-general, is the executive arm of the KPU. It is responsible for the administration of the organization at the national level. The KPU also has permanent offices in all provinces and regencies. Depending on the size and population of the regional jurisdiction, these offices are led by five or seven

commissioners at the provincial level and three or seven commissioners at the regency level who were identified through a selection process organized by the KPU Secretariat.⁴

In addition to the KPU, the Election Supervisory Board (*Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum – Bawaslu*) oversees the implementation of elections. At the national level, Bawaslu consists of five commissioners who are selected for five-year terms in the same manner as KPU commissioners. Its regional counterparts are permanent institutions consisting of five or seven commissioners in each province and five commissioners in each regency. Below the regency level, Bawaslu membership is not permanent and consists of three members at the sub-district level and one field supervisor at the ward/village level. Electoral disputes are first filed with Bawaslu, where they are classified and channeled to appropriate institutions. Bawaslu has adjudicatory power to resolve disputes between the KPU and candidates, and to issue rulings on administrative election violations. It also leads a task force, composed of police officials and state prosecutors, on electoral crimes.

What measures are in place to safeguard the elections and voters during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The General Election Commission (KPU) has made modifications and changes to previous regulations on the conduct of elections. These include new safeguards to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 throughout the election stages. As outlined in KPU's regulation on "The Implementation of the Recommended Concurrent Elections for Governors and Vice Governors, Regents and Vice Regents, and/or Mayors and Vice Mayors During Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Non-Natural Disaster," there are set restrictions on campaign activities involving large gatherings such as at concerts, competitions and bazaars. In-person campaign events are still allowed but are limited to 50 participants. During such events, all participants are required to wear masks and maintain one meter between individuals. The campaign teams must provide hand sanitizer or facilities for participants to wash their hands.

The Election Supervisory Board (Bawaslu) will issue a written warning to a campaign team if health protocols are not followed by all campaign participants. In cooperation with the police and local officials, Bawaslu may stop a campaign event if instructions in the written warning are not followed within one hour. Bawaslu may also ban candidates from conducting campaign activities for three days if it finds serious health protocol violations.

The KPU has introduced several measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in polling stations on Election Day. The maximum number of voters per polling station has been reduced from the 800 allowed by law to 500. Voters are required to wear masks, bring their own pens, vote during a designated time slot and maintain a distance of at least one meter from others when queuing and inside the polling station. Personal protective equipment, in the form of surgical gloves, face shields and masks, is provided to all polling station workers. Hazmat suits are provided to anticipate medical emergencies, such as evacuating any voters who faint at the polls. Voters are required to wash their

⁴ The one exception to this is in Aceh Province, where the selection process is led by the local Regional House of Representatives.

hands before entering and after exiting the polling station at hand-washing facilities provided at each polling station. Poll workers will conduct temperature checks using thermometer guns and provide disposable plastic gloves for all voters prior to entering the polling station and will disinfect polling stations regularly. Voters with a body temperature above 37.3 degrees Celsius will be asked to vote in special booths separated by a plastic screen. Poll workers will drip indelible ink onto the fingers of each person who has cast a vote instead of voters dipping a finger into the ink as in previous elections.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

The election law guarantees that voters with visual, physical and other disabilities have the right to be assisted when casting their ballots and requires that their votes be kept confidential. Voters with disabilities are allowed to bring a person of their choice, such as a family member or friend, to the polling station to help them with the voting process. They can also request the assistance of a poll worker. To guarantee the secrecy of the vote, any person serving as an assistant who intentionally informs another person of the voter's choice is subject to a fine or imprisonment. To enforce this rule, the General Election Commission requires that assistants sign a form indicating that they will keep the voter's choice confidential. Tactile braille ballot templates are provided at all polling stations to help voters who are blind or have low vision in casting their ballots.

What provisions are in place to assist voters with disabilities during the pandemic?

The General Election Commission (KPU) regulation on the conduct of the 2020 regional head elections during the COVID-19 pandemic does not outline specific measures on how to assist voters with disabilities. However, KPU is ensuring that poll workers and voters will follow health protocols, including maintaining physical distance and wearing personal protective equipment. KPU has relied on specific recommendations from Indonesian disabled people's organizations (DPOs) to modify several voting and counting procedures during the pandemic. This includes guidelines for polling staff to lower their masks and wear face shields when communicating with voters who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to allow for lip reading, as well as allowing voters who are blind or have low vision to remove disposable gloves when using the braille template provided for voting. DPOs have recommended the use of transparent masks to KPU, although KPU is not certain if it will be able to procure these masks, which are not readily available in Indonesia.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

No, out-of-country voting is allowed only during presidential and legislative elections.

Which electoral system will be used in these elections?

In most instances, regional head elections use a first-past-the-post, or winner-take-all, system. Therefore, the candidate who receives the most votes in an election will be declared the winner even if he or she does not receive a majority of the vote (i.e., more than 50 percent of valid votes). However, in Jakarta, and in elections where only one candidate is running, an absolute majority system is employed. If the candidate in an uncontested election does not receive a majority of the votes, then the General

Election Commission will organize a new election for the office in question to be held in the next concurrent regional head election scheduled for 2024.

Who is eligible to compete in these elections?

To compete in a regional head election, a candidate may run independently or under the nomination of a political party or a coalition of parties. In general, all candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Be an Indonesian citizen;
- Be at least 30 years old for gubernatorial races, or 25 years old for mayoral and regency elections;
- Be considered physically and mentally healthy based on a medical examination;
- Not be currently imprisoned for a crime; and
- Be running for a first or second term for the position in question, as the law prohibits people from holding a third term for a position even if it is in a different constituency.

A person running as an independent candidate must demonstrate that she or he has the support of between 3 percent and 6.5 percent of eligible voters in the constituency by providing copies of the supporters' national electronic identification cards.⁵ Furthermore, parties or coalitions can only nominate candidates if they hold at least 20 percent of the seats in the Regional House of Representatives or if they received at least 25 percent of valid votes in the previous regional legislative election.

There are no restrictions limiting candidates with COVID-19 from running for election. During the candidate registration period, candidates must submit a COVID-19 test result. Following the close of candidate registration on September 6, the General Election Commission (KPU) announced that 60 candidates have tested positive for COVID-19 during registration. Potential candidates who test positive for COVID-19 are requested to undergo necessary treatments. Potential candidates who have tested positive with COVID-19 are not allowed to proceed to the mandatory medical check-up stage of the registration process and begin campaigning until they test negative. However, KPU does not enforce mandatory treatment for candidates who test positive for COVID-19, and there are no requirements for candidates to declare that they are infected with COVID-19 during the campaign period.

Are there any provisions to support the participation of women and minorities?

There are no quotas or other special provisions for women and minority candidates. Access to campaign finance has been one of the greatest hurdles for women and minorities running for office. The current regional head election law attempts to lower this access barrier by allowing some campaign activities to be funded directly through regional state budgets. These activities include television airtime for candidate debates, campaign advertisements and the production of campaign materials. Campaign

⁵ The exact percentage of support required depends on the region's population size and the voter list from the last national election.

spending caps, which are covered below, are also implemented in an attempt to provide a more equal playing field for women and minority candidates; however, the spending limits remain high.

What is the structure of the ballots?

All ballots will consist of boxes for each candidate that are organized by, and labeled with, unique candidate numbers assigned randomly by the General Election Commission. In each box, voters will find the names and pictures of a candidate and his or her running mate. Voters will use a nail to puncture a hole within the box of the candidate of their choice. In elections where only one candidate is running, a second empty box will be provided for voters to vote against the candidate.

What is the term of office for regional heads?

The term of office for regional heads is five years. However, due to the scheduling of simultaneous national and regional elections in 2024, the governors, mayors and regents elected in 2020 will hold office only until 2024, or about three years after they are inaugurated in 2021.

What technology will be used?

The General Election Commission (KPU) uses several applications in its management of elections, including a country-wide intranet that connects KPU's 549 offices. KPU has required candidates to use its Candidacy Information System (SILON) during the registration process to run in the 2020 regional head election. Candidates should provide all required registration information in SILON for further verification by KPU. Since the 2014 election cycle, KPU has maintained the largest national computerized voter registration system in the world, called SIDALIH (*Sistem Informasi Data Pemilih – Voter Data Information System*). SIDALIH includes features that help standardize and regulate voter list processes and has been used to produce voter lists for the 2020 regional head elections. Voters can check their names in the voter list through SIDALIH's [publication portal](#).

KPU does not use any electronic voting or counting technology. Votes are cast on paper ballots, counted by hand and tabulated manually. Ahead of the 2020 regional head elections, KPU conducted trials for the use of an electronic recapitulation system, SIREKAP (*Sistem Informasi Rekapitulasi Suara – Vote Recapitulation Information System*). During the elections, SIREKAP will continue to be tested and used as a supporting tool for counting and recapitulation. It will publish the preliminary results, while votes will be tabulated manually to obtain the final results. Polling station staff will photograph polling station result forms directly from the SIREKAP application installed on their phone. The application will automatically read the image and tabulate it with results from other polling stations. Election results from polling stations in SIREKAP will also be published online and used to provide preliminary results of the election.

What is the election management body doing to strengthen its technology and procedures to resist vulnerabilities and counter foreign interference?

The General Election Commission (KPU) has been the target of cyberattacks since 2004. These attacks have become increasingly complex as the use of information technology by Indonesian election management bodies in the election process has increased. To anticipate potential cyberattacks against its system from domestic and foreign actors, KPU has established a task force drawn from government agencies such as the National Cyber and Encryption Agency, National Police Cyber Investigation Center, State Intelligence Agency, Assessment and Application of Technology Agency and Ministry of Communication and Information. This task force jointly coordinates efforts to strengthen KPU cybersecurity and respond to cyber-incidents in the election administration process. KPU's public-facing publication servers have been separated from sensitive production servers, ensuring that election data is protected if such attacks occur. Auditing and penetration testing are conducted on existing and new critical applications. Institutionally, administrative controls are updated to minimize cyber-threats targeting KPU officials, information and communications technology systems and infrastructure. KPU has also implemented a series of cyber-hygiene trainings for its staff and election management officials.

Where are vote counting and tabulation held?

Votes are counted at polling stations soon after polls close at 1:00 p.m. on Election Day. Ballots are counted in daylight, generally in plain sight of the community. After the result at the polling station has been announced, a copy of the results is posted at the station, a photo image of the result form is uploaded into the Vote Recapitulation Information System and another copy is transported to the subdistrict level, where the first level of manual tabulation takes place. Manual tabulation continues through one or two more administrative levels. Results of the races for mayors and regents will be tallied and determined at the regency level between December 13 and December 17, while gubernatorial races will be tallied and determined at the province level between December 16 and December 20.

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

International and national election observers can observe elections in Indonesia. The General Election Commission (KPU) will issue accreditations to observers who plan to monitor the 2020 regional head elections. Requirements for an international monitoring mission are relatively strict and involve obtaining approvals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Intelligence Agency, disclosing sources of funding, demonstrating past experience in election monitoring and obtaining visas. As of November 20, no international organizations have registered to observe the regional head elections.

The requirements for national observers are less strict, as they are not required to obtain approvals from government ministries or agencies, and they are able to register through the KPU's regional offices. However, any national observer group must prove that its organization is independent and non-partisan. No special code of conduct or regulations are in place for observers during the pandemic. However, all

observers are required to follow regulations and health protocols set by the government to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

When will official results be announced?

Voting starts at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 1:00 p.m. local time. Counting at polling stations will begin immediately after polling ends, and results at each polling station will be tallied and announced before sunset. Digital records of election results in the Vote Recapitulation Information System, SIREKAP, from different polling stations will then be aggregated through the system and officiated through a recapitulation process that takes place at the sub-district, district and provincial levels.

The General Election Commission (KPU) will announce the official results of district-level elections (for regents and mayors) between December 13-23 and the results of gubernatorial races between December 16-26. Despite the lengthy official recapitulation process, KPU has been able to provide preliminary results within 48 hours of aggregating polling station result data recorded online in its system. Additionally, registered pollsters normally publish the results of their quick counts by the end of Election Day. The trial of SIREKAP in the upcoming elections is expected to reduce the time required for the vote tabulation process. Since digital data is used instead of the hard-copy results, KPU expects that, when SIREKAP is officially used in the future, regions will eventually be able to finalize election results within five days after the election, compared to the current official manual recapitulation process that takes seven to 10 days for regent and mayoral races and 14 days for gubernatorial races.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Administrative disputes between the General Election Commission and election participants are adjudicated by the Election Supervisory Board, which will provide final and binding decisions. Candidate registration disputes are exceptions; in these cases, the plaintiff can appeal the decision to the State Administrative Court. Disputes over election results must be brought to the Constitutional Court, whose decision cannot be appealed. To challenge an election result, the percentage difference in votes between the winning candidate and the runner-up must not exceed 0.5 percent to 2 percent depending on the population of the region where the election occurred. Such cases must be filed within three days after the official announcement of the result.

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

Candidates' campaign expenditures are limited by the General Election Commission (KPU) according to the region in which they are running for office. The KPU determines the limits based on a formula that considers a region's population, geographic size and market values for goods and services. Many have criticized this approach, as campaign spending remains high. For example, the spending limit for regent candidates for the regency of Cianjur in West Java is IDR 110 billion (approximately USD \$7.9 million).

For campaign donations, the law permits individuals to donate up to IDR 75 million (approximately USD \$5,400) and companies and other legal entities to donate up to IDR 750 million (approximately USD \$54,000).

Resources

- [Indonesian electoral information](#)
- [General Election Commission](#)
- [Election Supervisory Body](#)
- [Constitutional Court](#)

About IFES in Indonesia

Since 1998, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has provided support to Indonesia's civil society, electoral institutions and other key stakeholders across the whole range of electoral disciplines, including legal drafting, election system design, results mechanisms, seat allocation, electoral dispute resolution, voter registration, and voter education and public information.

During the June 2018 regional elections, IFES piloted initiatives to counter disinformation and is currently working with civil society organizations, election management bodies and interfaith groups to continue this critical work in the lead-up to the national election. For the 2019 election cycle and hundreds of local elections conducted concurrently since 2015, IFES worked with civil society and academia to support electoral legal reform; improvement of election operations; inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities in the electoral process; and maintenance of a comprehensive Indonesian [election information portal](#). IFES also shared international experiences and best practices with Indonesian election management bodies as they faced new challenges, such as cybersecurity attacks, disinformation threats and COVID-19.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the General Election Commission as of November 25, 2020, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems policy or technical recommendations.