

World Watch Research

Indonesia: Background Information

September 2024



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Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research

September 2024

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Contents

Copyright and sources	1
Map of country	2
Recent history	2
Political and legal landscape	3
Religious landscape.....	7
Economic landscape.....	8
Social and cultural landscape.....	11
Technological landscape	14
Security situation	16
Christian origins	18
Church spectrum today.....	19
Further useful reports.....	20
External Links	20

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World Watch Research has divided up the previously named Full Country Dossier into two separate documents:

- Background country information (published annually in summer)
- Persecution dynamics (published annually in January).

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Map of country



Indonesia: Population (UN estimate for 2024)	Christians	Chr%
279,798,000	36,608,000	13.1

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., *World Christian Database*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

Recent history

Indonesia, which is spread across more than seventeen thousand islands and more than 5000 kilometers east-west and 1700 km north-south, declared independence on 17 August 1945. It then fought for its independence from the Netherlands in a four year war ending in 1949, having been occupied by Japan in World War II. After years of violence and corruption, the country made a transition to democracy, starting in 1998. The first direct presidential elections were held in 2004.

In the run up to the elections in early 2017 for the office of governor of Jakarta (the capital and largest city of Indonesia) mass protests erupted, bringing upwards of 200,000 people to the streets. These demonstrations were against the ethnic Chinese and Christian Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (then known as “Ahok”) on grounds of alleged blasphemy. Having won the first round of elections in February 2017, Purnama lost the second round and was sentenced to two years in prison. He decided not to appeal against the verdict and thus keep the political situation in Indonesia calm. (After his release, he worked as the president commissioner of state-owned oil and gas firm Pertamina. He resigned from this position in February 2024 to actively engage in the presidential campaign of his party.)

The simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections on 17 April 2019, had a clear outcome, seeing incumbent Joko Widodo winning with a margin of 11%. Whereas religion did play a role in campaigning, it was not as central as many observers had feared. The president sought to leave a legacy (as this was his last term in office) and pushed through with the [relocation of the capital](#) to a geographically more central (but in almost every other aspect more remote) place in the province of East Kalimantan (The Guardian, 26 August 2019).

In 2021 and 2022, politics in Indonesia was largely - and unusually - focused on foreign policy as the country held the G20 presidency in 2022. The ripple effects of the Russia/Ukraine war have been felt clearly in Indonesia as well, especially in the balancing act concerning invitations to the Bali Summit held in November 2022. President Joko Widodo even made the effort of travelling to Kiev and Moscow in June/July 2022. Indonesia continued to be in the international spotlight through holding the ASEAN chairmanship in 2023. One of its main [regional challenges](#) has been the situation in war-torn Myanmar (HRW, 31 March 2023).

Domestic politics has been almost exclusively focused on the general elections held on 14 February 2024 and in preparing for the transitioning to the newly elected president, Prabowo Subianto. While the campaigning saw much less emphasis on religious divisions, observers think that [polarization](#) is only resting in the wings and the [policy of 'reformasi'](#) will be further reversed in due course (New Mandala, 12 and 13 December 2023). [Islamists](#) and their way of thinking have by no means disappeared; they simply did not see any benefit in backing one candidate (New Mandala, 1 February 2024).

Political and legal landscape

Democracy only became established in the country in 1998; the 2024 presidential elections were the sixth in the country's history. The country remains one of the very few genuine democracies in a Muslim-majority country.

Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto won the [presidential election](#) with a surprising 58% of the votes in the first round (Reuters, 15 February 2024). At the time of writing and with more parties endorsing or cooperating with him, it seems that Prabowo may command a [safe majority of 71%](#) (Benar News, 2 May 2024). His [teaming up](#) with outgoing President Jokowi's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, already raised eyebrows and tainted President Jokowi's image of being an outsider to elite politics. The fact that the Constitutional Court even changed rules for Rakabuming, who was born 1987, and lowered the age threshold for holding such a prominent office in order for him to be able to run, certainly caused a stir, even more so as the judicial panel was headed by his uncle, Jokowi's brother-in-law, who was later forced to step down (Reuters, 7 November 2023).

Pancasila or Sharia law?

While Islamic political parties have never won many votes in elections, moderate Islam is increasingly being challenged by radical influences, and society continues to become more conservative in religious aspects. In 2019, even the president at that time, Joko Widodo, felt obliged to choose conservative Islamic cleric Maa'ruf Amin as his vice-president in order to counter allegations slandering his religious credentials. Islam is thus being used as an effective political tool and has a [prominent place](#) in the political agenda (Reuters, 18 April 2019). Islamists are increasingly [shaping politics](#) in Indonesia (IPAC, 15 March 2019).

No matter who holds power in Jakarta (or rather in the new capital Nusantara), the new president will have to grapple with the fact that local authorities enjoy a considerable autonomy, stretching to following their own self-given rules. One example in 2023 was where regions and even whole provinces like [West Sumatra](#), were signing off laws basing their culture and tradition on Sharia law and the Quran (Indonesia at Melbourne, 24 January 2023). Growing support among high-school students for the

introduction of Sharia law is another trend politicians and others need to watch carefully. A recent study published by the Setara Institute and INFID was based on a [survey](#) of more than 900 students from five cities across the archipelago (UCA News, 18 May 2023). It found that more than 83% of the respondents did not think that the nation's founding ideology, Pancasila, can be regarded as permanent and 56% supported the implementation of Sharia law. While 61% said they felt more comfortable if all female students were wearing headscarves, another response was even more worrying: 20% of all respondents said they would be willing to commit violent acts in defending their religion, and a third even said they would be ready to give their lives for it. This adds to a growing number of polls in recent years, illustrating the increasingly conservative and less tolerant development of society.

A further example was a 2023 Pew survey on attitudes towards democracy in Indonesia which showed mixed and [seemingly contradictory results](#) (The Diplomat, 7 March 2024). While 76% of the Indonesian respondents to the Pew survey said that representative democracy is favorable, 51% said it would be favorable to be ruled by a strongman and even 67% said they would prefer to be ruled by experts, not elected officials. While these statements can be understood in the context, a stunning 69% said military rule would be somewhat or even very good for the country.

Hardline leader of what was previously called the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI - see below: Religious landscape), Muhammad Rizieq Shihab, decided to [return to Indonesia](#) after three years of self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia. He was greeted by thousands of supporters at the airport (Benar News, 11 November 2020). He and his supporters had been instrumental in campaigning against the Christian governor of Jakarta in 2017, who was then sentenced for blasphemy. The FPI was soon after [banned](#) by the government (Jakarta Post, 30 December 2020). A court in Jakarta [sentenced](#) Rizieq Shihab to an additional four years imprisonment for concealing evidence about his health status (Associated Press, 24 June 2021). The sentence was [reduced](#) after an appeal to the Supreme Court to two years (UCA News, 16 November 2021). Even though the FPI seems to have currently lost influence, there is [no lack](#) of other radical Islamic groups in Indonesia (IPAC, "Extremist charities and terrorist fund-raising in Indonesia", Report 76, 31 March 2022). After having spent less than half of his sentence in prison, Shihab was released on parole on 20 July 2022 and declared in a live-streamed statement that he will continue his fight to "[forbid evil](#)" (Benar News, 20 July 2022). He has been comparably silent for the last two years and did not publicly back any of the presidential candidates. However, he appeared as [amicus curiae](#) in the 2024 procedures before the Constitutional Court, where the losing presidential candidates disputed the results (Voice of Indonesia, 17 April 2024). The Court [rejected](#) all appeals in April 2024 (AP News, 24 April 2024).

Developing infrastructure

In terms of infrastructure, two significant developments need to be mentioned:

- Plans for relocating Indonesia's capital to the island of Borneo took off in 2022 with building-work commencing. This has often been called President Jokowi's legacy and was part of his strong drive for developing infrastructure. The relocation of the capital - which has been given the (Javanese) name "[Nusantara](#)" - comes with an initial price tag of 32.5 billion USD (Al-Jazeera, 18 January 2022). At the same time, investors seem [reluctant](#) and experts are doubting if a city built from scratch in a jungle area really will take off (ABC News, 5 July 2023). Nevertheless, the government

announced Nusantara will be operational in 2024 and it plans to [relocate](#) as many of the 12,000 civil servants as possible by September 2024 (The Jakarta Post, 22 April 2024).

- The long-awaited and Chinese-built [high-speed rail](#) between Jakarta and Bandung opened commercially in August 2023 (Straits Times, 31 May 2023).

Positive developments towards Christians

Changes in the government's human rights policy could not be observed, although there were positive decrees and notifications by government ministers:

- In January 2024, three government ministers, Minister of Manpower Ida Fauziyah, Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform Abdullah Azwar Anas, and Minister of Religious Affairs Yaqut Cholil Quomas, issued a [joint decree](#) stating that Christians do not need to use the Arabic term Isa al Masih for Jesus Christ during major Christian holidays anymore, but can use the Bahasa Indonesia term, Yesus Kristus (HRW, 5 March 2024).
- In November 2023, the Minister for Religion issued a notification saying that government offices can be used as temporary houses of worship for religious minorities ([ICC, 27 November 2023](#)). Although it has to be seen how this will be implemented locally, it is still a positive move by a government office.

A good illustration of the practice surrounding the issuing of building permits can be seen in the case of Yasmin Church in Bogor, West Java – a church belonging to the Indonesian Christian Church denomination. Despite a Supreme Court ruling in December 2010 confirming that the church authorities had passed all requirements set up by law to obtain a building permit, the town's mayor refused to abide by this ruling and the government did not take action against him, fearing social unrest. The church started to worship in front of the Indonesian president's palace in Jakarta instead, but this did not change the situation at all. In December 2021, the Bogor City authorities, still not abiding by the Supreme Court ruling, held a '[groundbreaking ceremony](#)' for constructing the church at another location, an option part of the church declined (UCA News, 7 December 2021), effectively causing a church-split. On 9 April 2023, the new church building was inaugurated. The fact that Mahfud MD, Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security, Muhammad Tito Karnavian, Minister for Home Affairs, and Atnike Nova, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission attended the ceremony illustrates how high-profile and politically sensitive the situation had become.

Anti-government demonstrations

[Protests](#), joined by workers, students and Islamic groups, some of them radical, took place against the "Omnibus Law" in October 2020 (Reuters, 13 October 2020). Despite the unrest, President Joko Widodo [signed it](#) into effect on 2 November 2020 (PwC, November 2020) in the hope that it would reduce red tape and encourage economic growth. On 25 November 2021, the law was declared "[conditionally unconstitutional](#)" (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 25 November 2021). The process of revising the law started in June 2022. It certainly acted as a catalyst for the formation of new political and civil society groups, such as the one using the acronym 'KAMI' (Indonesian for 'us' - a short form of "Save Indonesia Action Coalition". However, this group did not play a role in the 2024 elections and even parties once seen as urban and more reform-oriented like PSI did not cross the 4% threshold.

Parliament also [replaced](#) one of the judges of the Constitutional Court because he deemed a law unconstitutional to the disliking of the parliamentarians. Such a move can be seen as a direct attack on the independence of judiciary (Jakarta Post, 2 December 2022).

Gender perspective

From a gender perspective, women remained disadvantaged within Indonesia's political and legal context. There is a lack of legal protection for women having undertaken an interreligious marriage and Muslim women cannot marry or divorce under civil law, as these are governed only by Sharia law. Aceh operates under special autonomy granted by the state and thus is the only province enforcing provisions of the Islamic Criminal law, consequently, women are most subject to discriminatory laws in this province ([US State Department IRFR 2023 Indonesia](#)). Although child marriage is prohibited (Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, Articles 16, 20 and 22) and the practice is on the decline, it remains a live issue, especially in rural areas; 16% of girls marry before the age of 18 ([Girls Not Brides Indonesia](#)).

Women's rights groups have highlighted the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women's rights, noting that several long-awaited pieces of legislation were put on the backburner ([The Jakarta Post, 3 August 2020](#)). The [Sexual Violence Prevention bill](#) first proposed in 2016 was finally passed into law in 2022 and was heavily criticized for its watered-down language and provisions; articles relating to forced marriage, forced prostitution, forced abortion, sexual torture and sexual slavery were all initially removed, along with provisions protecting the rights of those with disabilities (Al-Jazeera, 14 April 2022). The Domestic Worker Protection Bill, under deliberation for 16 years, also remains stuck in parliament ([Japan Times, 8 May 2023](#)).

Religious landscape

Indonesia: Religious context	Number of adherents	%
Christians	36,608,000	13.1
Muslim	217,178,000	77.6
Hindu	4,525,000	1.6
Buddhist	2,356,000	0.8
Ethnic religionist	5,941,000	2.1
Jewish	210	0.0
Bahai	27,700	0.0
Atheist	325,000	0.1
Agnostic	4,123,000	1.5
Other	8,713,800	3.1
<i>OTHER includes Chinese folk, New religionist, Sikh, Spiritist, Taoist, Confucianist, Jain, Shintoist, Zoroastrian.</i>		

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., *World Christian Database*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

According to WCD 2024 estimates, 77.6% of the population is Muslim. There are also millions of atheists/agnostics and followers of ethnic religions, Hinduism (mainly on Bali), Chinese folk religion and Buddhism.

While Christianity became a major religion in eastern Indonesia, Islam became strong in the western and central parts, especially on the most populous island, Java. The very special brand of Islam in Indonesia, named “Islam Nusantara” by its largest organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama*, has been relatively moderate and tolerant towards other religions. However, it received a strong blow with the successful blasphemy campaign during the election of Jakarta’s governor early in 2017. Governor “Ahok” had been the first Christian governor in Jakarta for more than five decades, and it was feared that his prison sentencing for blasphemy and the emotionally charged (and religiously motivated) election campaign, could have proved a game-changer for Christians in the country. Another shock were the bomb attacks against three churches in Surabaya in May 2018 and another suicide attack against the cathedral in Makassar in 2021 and two mass killings by radical Islamic group MIT. These were the last deadly attacks against Christians committed by radical Islamic groups. However, polls reveal that an increasing number of Muslims hold negative views concerning religious minorities such as Christians.

The influence of radical Islamic organizations is growing. Neither national nor local governments dare to ignore their demands, fearing public unrest. One of the most radical and vocal of such organizations had been "Front Pembela Islam" (FPI - which translates as "Islamic Defenders' Front"), which was banned by the government and reacted by simply copying what other radical groups have done

elsewhere; it heeded Rizieq's advice to 'Relax and just create a new vehicle' by now calling into life the Islamic Unity Front, which bears the same acronym in Indonesian as the original organization, [FPI](#) (Jakarta Post, 1 January 2021). The Indonesian government had taken action to close a radical Islamic group called *Hizb-ut-Tahrir Indonesia* in 2017, but this is just one of the smaller groups active in Indonesia.

Indonesia has been and remains - together with the Philippines - the 'most religious' country in the world, that is, according to a survey published in July 2020: 98% of the respondents said that religion is [very important](#) in their lives (Pew Forum, 20 July 2020). By far the bigger challenge is that Indonesian society as a whole holds increasingly conservative religious views. A study, published in May 2018, found that a growing number of students hold [Islamist views](#) and 39% of those surveyed had been exposed to radical Islamic ideology (Benar News, 3 May 2018). The local NGO Setara Institute published a study on ten public universities in Indonesia in June 2019, showing how Islamic radicals are [using university structures](#) to win followers (UCA News, 3 June 2019). Thus, the next generation is being educated to hold very conservative or even radical Islamic views. This is likely to lead to an increase in societal discrimination and even to violence towards Christians in the future – and not just in Aceh and other hot-spots. According to Indonesia's State Intelligence Agency, [85% of all millennials](#) in the country have been exposed to radicalism - mainly via social media (SCMP, 23 June 2021).

One of the great unknowns at the moment is how the largest Muslim organizations in the country – the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) and the *Muhammadiyah* – will counter the growing radicalization in the country. Traditionally, they were seen as moderate and tolerant towards other religious groups, but especially the youth wing of NU has been vocal in calling for a more conservative understanding of Islam. Whereas Vice-president Amin is a senior figure in NU, Yahya Staquf, General-secretary of NU continues to take a strong stand against [radicalism in Islam](#), a battle he admits he is not optimistic about winning (International-LaCroix, 18 February 2019). After a recent cabinet reshuffle, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, who also chairs the NU youth wing, was made the new minister of religion. This was the continuation of a long tradition (although his direct predecessor had been a former general not related with NU). The new minister announced in one of his first statements that he would work to uphold the [rights of religious minorities](#), naming Shia and Ahmadiyah (Jakarta Post, 26 December 2020), but also meaning Christians and others. One first step may be the announcement to [ease the process for obtaining building permits](#) (UCA News, 3 June 2023). While these changes may be an uphill battle, the new regulations show that action is being taken to help religious minorities. It remains to be seen to what extent this translates into changes on the ground.

Religious minorities such as Ahmadis (a Muslim minority) and Christians are frequent targets for discrimination and acts of violence, but Indonesia is still a very diverse nation: One province, Aceh, at the western tip of Sumatra, is ruled by Sharia law and is even tightening its rules; several other provinces have also introduced Sharia by-laws, leaving Christians in particular in a difficult situation; but at the same time, there are Christian-majority and Hindu-majority provinces as well.

Economic landscape

Indonesia is the largest economy in Southeast Asia (SEA) and is developing fast, considering its unique geographical challenge of being made up of seventeen thousand islands. The government puts a strong emphasis on the development of infrastructure such as airports, ports, railroad connections and (toll)

roads. For this, Indonesia relies on Chinese help and loans (for example for the highspeed rail between Jakarta and Bandung), but China is just one of a whole group of partners and Indonesia has taken care not to make itself as dependent on China as other SEA countries have done. Japan has been another important partner for infrastructure.

According to [UNDP's Human Development Report Indonesia](#) (data updates as of 13 March 2024):

- **Gross National Income per capita (2017 USD PPP):** 12.046
- **Rate of multidimensional poverty:** 3.6% of the population are living in multidimensional poverty
- **Remittances:** 1.04% of the national GDP

According to [World Bank Indonesia data](#): (accessed 22 August 2024):

- In July 2023, Indonesia regained upper middle income status, after having dropped out in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2017 international USD):** 12.410 (2022)
- **GDP per capita growth rate:** 4.6% (2022)
- **Poverty gap at 6.85 USD a day (2017 PPP):** 21% (2023)

The World Bank makes an apt summary in its [Indonesia overview](#) (last updated: 20 October 2023):

- "The largest economy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia – a diverse archipelago nation of more than 300 ethnic groups – has charted impressive economic growth since overcoming the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. Today, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation and 10th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity. Further, Indonesia has made enormous gains in poverty reduction, cutting the poverty rate by more than half since 1999, to under 10 percent in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Indonesia is pursuing a 20-year development plan, spanning from 2005 to 2025. The plan is segmented into 5-year medium-term development plans called RPJMN (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional*), each with a different set of development priorities. The current plan, the last phase of the 20-year vision, aims to further strengthen Indonesia's economy by improving the country's human capital and competitiveness in the global market. Indonesia successfully concluded the G20 Presidency in November 2022 and held the ASEAN chairmanship in 2023, showcasing leadership in representing developing nations' interests and a capacity to play a more active and strategic role in working together with developed countries to achieve sustainable post-pandemic recovery and grow stronger amid global uncertainties."

The growth of the middle class, predominantly in urban areas, has led to increasing prosperity and consumption which has strengthened society as a whole. However, at the same time, Indonesia is one of the most unequal societies in SEA, the GINI ratio (measuring inequality in a society by income) [hovering around 0.4](#), this growing wealth has been distributed unequally and in clusters (University of Melbourne, 27 November 2018). But numbers can be misleading: While the unemployment rate remains below the 5% mark, a stunning three quarters of all employees (in the non-agricultural sectors) work in [the informal sector](#) and thus face socially insecure conditions (UCA News, 14 June 2019).

According to World Bank's [Indonesia Economics Prospects](#) Report, December 2023:

- "Although Indonesia's economy is larger today than at any time before, like many other countries it has yet to fully recover to its pre-pandemic trajectory. This reflects scarring effects from the pandemic, including in labor markets and productivity growth. The overall economic outlook is subject to downside risks, primarily ones that could emanate from outside Indonesia: higher-for-longer interest rates in major economies could weigh on global demand, raise borrowing costs, and make it harder to borrow on world markets. Global geopolitical uncertainty could disrupt value chains."
- (Page 32) "The poverty rate concurrently fell from 19 percent in 2000 to 9.5 percent by 2022." Still, millions remain economically insecure.

Indonesia is the 16th largest economy worldwide in absolute terms and is projected to grow annually at a rate of more than 5%, although it shares the fate of all other countries, namely the [growing risk](#) of food insecurity and price hikes from a protracted Ukraine war (World Bank, Indonesia Economic Prospects Press Release, 22 June 2022). Indonesia may become one of the countries to benefit from the US-China trade war and has the potential to become the [seventh](#) (some say even [fifth](#)) largest economy in the world within 20 years (McKinsey, 1 September 2012; The Independent, 2 September 2017).

Indonesia depends strongly on its export of commodities, including oil and gas, so in the short term it will benefit from higher commodity prices. For 2023, it aims at receiving investment of [95 billion USD](#) into its nickel industry alone, winning high quality investment beyond mere extraction, but also onshore battery production (Invest Indonesia, 4 May 2023). While this policy has produced some results, it also came with political, environmental and ethical [challenges](#) (USIP, 21 March 2024). Indonesia is also a large exporter of palm oil and thus tries to diversify its export markets due to expected import restrictions on palm oil to Europe.

In 2023, Indonesia decided to apply for [membership](#) in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is often perceived as a "rich countries' club" (Lowy Institute, 17 October 2023), indicating an increasing confidence in its economic development. However, fulfilling the rather strict criteria for membership will remain an [uphill battle](#) (Benar News, 27 February 2024).

Depending on the region, due to discrimination, Christians may face more problems in finding jobs in a still recovering economy. Apart from that, they are facing the same difficulties as everyone else.

Islamic economy

President Jokowi has announced his intention to put a strong emphasis on the "Islamic economy" (i.e. the export of Halal products and the expansion of Sharia-conform financial products and tourism etc.). The [Islamic Banking sector](#) already had a head start and Sharia bank branches are sprouting across the country (Reuters, 21 June 2021). But for now, all effort is focused on getting the economy back on track in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Corruption

One of the challenges haunting Indonesian development is the deeply-rooted corruption. The country sits at rank 115 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's [Corruption Perception Index](#)

[2023](#) and on an almost weekly basis, new cases of corruption are uncovered, affecting local and national politicians from all parties and state-owned and private companies. The office investigating these cases, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), has been limited in its impact by parliament. In May 2023, authorities [arrested](#) Minister of Telecommunications, Johnny G. Plate, a Catholic Christian, because of corruption (The Diplomat, 18 May 2023). In July 2024, former Minister of Agriculture, Syahrul Yasin Limpo, was [sentenced](#) to ten years prison because of corruption (Benar News, 11 July 2024). He became the sixth minister in Joko Widodo's administration to be sentenced on such charges.

Gender perspective

Despite having achieved higher levels of educational attainment than men, women in Indonesia struggle to capitalize on this advantage economically, due to restrictive cultural practices, and the significant reduction in jobs and working hours in the health and welfare sectors as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic ([World Bank blogs, 8 March 2021](#)). While the pandemic-induced economic shock contributed to increased employment rates among first-time female workers – reducing the gender gap by 14% – women with college degrees were 4.2% less likely to be employed, compared to women with less than a high school education ([World Bank blogs, 19 April 2023](#)).

In addition, there are still more than 60 local [dress codes](#) enforced nationwide and reports suggest non-Muslim women, including Christians, face severe consequences at work and in schools for non-compliance (HRW, 21 July 2022).

Social and cultural landscape

An estimated 57% of the whole population live on the Island of Java, which comprises just 6.7% of Indonesia's territory. This means that people from the other islands sometimes feel overlooked as a lot of development focuses on Java. Even the relocation of the country's capital to the island of Kalimantan will not easily change this perception. This is also a reminder that Indonesia is a patchwork of hundreds of different ethnicities, languages and cultures.

According to [UNDP's Human Development Report Indonesia](#) (data updates as of 13 March 2024) and the [World Factbook Indonesia](#) (accessed 22 August 2024):

- **Main ethnic groups:** Javanese 40.1%, Sundanese 15.5%, Malay 3.7%, Batak 3.6%, Madurese 3%, Betawi 2.9%, Minangkabau 2.7%, Buginese 2.7%, Bantenese 2%, other 23.8% (2010 est.)
- **Main languages:** Bahasa Indonesia (official, modified form of Malay), English, local dialects (of which the most widely spoken is Javanese), more than 700 languages are used in Indonesia
- **Urbanization rate:** 58.6%
- **Literacy rate:** 96%
- **Mean years of schooling:** 8.6 years
- **Health and education indicators:** Per 10,000 people, Indonesia has 6.2 physicians and 10 hospital beds, the pupil teacher ratio in primary school is 17:1.

According to [World Bank Indonesia data](#) (accessed 22 August 2024):

- **Population/Age:** 25.2% of the population is below the age of 14, 6.8% is above the age of 65 (2022)

- **Education:** The primary school enrollment is 101%, the completion rate is 102.4% (2022)
- **Unemployment:** 3.6%, 50.5% are in vulnerable employment (modeled ILO estimate) and the rate of people in the non-agricultural sector in informal employment is 72.5% (2016, [ILO](#)).
- **IDPs/Refugees:** Indonesia is neither a specific target nor source country, refugees - e.g. from the Middle East, Africa or Afghanistan - are present, especially in the cities, but their numbers are small. The World Bank estimated in a report published in 2017 that almost [4.8 million Indonesian](#) citizens were working legally abroad, but there are estimates almost doubling this number (before COVID-19 struck).
- **Malnourishment:** 30.8% of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition or stunting

According to [UNDP's Human Development Report Indonesia](#) (data updates as of 13 March 2024):

- **HDI score and ranking:** With a score of 0.713, Indonesia ranks 112th out of 189 countries. Its development has been slow and steady
- **Life expectancy:** 68.3 years
- **Median age:** 31.2 years
- **GINI coefficient:** 38.3
- **Gender inequality:** With a score of 0.439, Indonesia ranks 109th of 166 countries in the Gender Inequality Index
- **Unemployment:** The unemployment rate is 4.7% and 50.5% are in vulnerable employment. The rate of unemployed youth is 17%, the rate of youth neither in school nor employment is 22% (between 15 and 24 years of age).

Indonesia is the fourth most populated country in the world, with more than 40% of the population under the age of 25. It has therefore a surplus in workforce and an estimated 4.8 million people legally working abroad, 70% of whom are women, who mainly work as domestic maids and nannies, while male workers are often construction or plantation workers, many of them working in neighboring Malaysia. Most of these migrant workers are without their families which leads to emotional distress and many other challenges shared by migrant workers all over the world (weak legal position, abuse etc.). The government is striving to increase the production and service sector and education is widely seen as a key to progress. (The World Bank Economics Prospect Report December 2023 mentioned above in *Economic landscape* deals with the topic of educational challenges and the losses the COVID pandemic brought to Indonesia in this respect).

Apart from fighting poverty in general, the government (supported by the World Bank under the heading "promoting human capital") is making better education and training a priority in order to improve the livelihood of young people in particular. Indonesia opened the tertiary education sector for international partners; Australian [Monash University](#) was the first foreign university to open a physical campus just outside Jakarta in April 2022 (Monash University, 14 April 2022). Vocational training is another part of education emphasized by the country.

From 2014 onwards, the government implemented a public health insurance system with the goal of covering all citizens. [Challenges](#) remain, however, as the fees are necessarily low and infrastructure is difficult (Asia Pacific Observatory, Vol. 7, No.1, 2017). According to World Bank's [Indonesia Economic Prospects](#) report published in July 2020, between 2001 and 2018 expenditure for public health increased by 22% annually and the health insurance covers 83% of the population now (p.48).

Compared to similar countries, however, Indonesia is still lagging behind. The government prioritized healthcare spending by increasing the level of funding from 0.4% of the GDP in 2020 to 1.2% in 2021, at the same time, it reduced social assistance spending from 1.3% of the GDP to 1.0% (ibid, p.10). The introduction of an [Omnibus health law](#) led to criticism from opposition parties, civil society stakeholders, health professional groups, which even threatened to strike (Jakarta Post, 10 July 2023). This may prove a challenge for an already stretched health system.

Indonesia has remained a democracy, despite challenges and strong independent media. Debates in parliament are lively and open, with room for discussion and the questioning of government action. However, the previous government had co-opted almost all parties into the government, so there was no strong opposition, although parties did make themselves more visible again when the elections in 2024 took place. It remains to be seen if the PDI-P will be a strong opposition and what that means in terms of a healthy democracy. The media have grown in influence too, becoming a fourth source of power alongside the legislative, executive and judiciary powers. Whether the issue is attacks on religious minorities (mostly labelled as “sectarian strife”) or rampant corruption, the media (newspapers, TV, radio and social media) do not shy away from reporting details. A growing number of non-governmental organizations complete this picture. However, in reality such reporting does not change much. The numbers radical Islamic groups are able to mobilize are far more effective at influencing both society’s point of view and government action. Another factor is the strong influence that social media has, especially among young people (see below: *Technological landscape*).

One particularly strong social factor is the country's continued trend towards urbanization. Citizens from across the islands come to the bigger cities in search of work and a better life. This trend can be felt in many cities, but has become so evident in Metro Jakarta (with an estimated 30 million inhabitants) that the government decided to relocate the capital. While work on this major project has started (see above: *Political and legal landscape*), the relocation of the capital and thus, government functions, will be of little help in easing the problems in Metro Jakarta, as only 1.5 million inhabitants are projected to be living in Nusantara in a decade. This shows that the relocation is a generational project. Almost 60% of the population live in an urbanized environment; however, this still means that around 120 million people are living in rural areas - and the difference is extreme: The growing openness in criticizing the powerful does not reach all citizens, since local strongmen in rural areas have more means for staying in power. A shocking reminder of what local strongmen are capable of was the uncovering of a [human cage](#) within a regent's compound in Langkat/North Sumatra, with the provincial police estimating at least 600 victims of slavery over a span of 10 years (Tempo, 10 March 2022).

Christians participate in social and cultural life like everyone else, but while in urban areas they tend to belong to the middle class, in rural areas they are often facing poverty and related challenges. It is noteworthy that, according to official government statistics, the provinces with the highest levels of poverty in Indonesia (Papua, West Papua, NTT and Maluku) have a Christian majority population or a large Christian minority (Maluku with 46%). There are geographical and infrastructural reasons for this as well; other majority Christian provinces do better in these terms.

Gender perspective

With the exception of some matrilineal communities, Indonesia operates according to traditional norms. Indonesia's Marriage Law (Article 31) explicitly states that men are the head of the household and that women should manage the household. As highlighted by Human Rights Watch, reports of domestic violence cases associated with COVID-19 lockdown measures were twice the 2019 number ([HRW 2021 Indonesia country chapter](#)). Although recognized as a serious issue, domestic violence is considered a private matter and incidents are rarely reported; victims reportedly face significant social pressure not to speak out. Advocates have also warned that the pandemic could be linked to a spike in child marriages ([Asia News Network, 8 May 2023](#)). A [2021 UN study](#) revealed that the number of child marriages granted by the Religious Courts increased from 23,126 in 2019 to 64,211 cases in 2020 (UN, 10 June 2021, p.135).

According to a [2019 Study by Value Champion](#), Indonesia is the second most dangerous country to be a woman in the Asia Pacific region. Sexual harassment is reportedly rampant, and access to justice for victims is so poor that some have been jailed for reporting crimes against them ([CNN, 17 July 2019](#)). The practice of kidnapping a woman for the purpose of marriage (Yappa Maradda) also remains an issue of concern, particularly in Sumba ([UCA News, 9 July 2020](#); [BBC News, 21 July 2020](#)).

Furthermore, about 75% of Indonesia's female population – about 80 million women and girls – wear the hijab ([HRW, 18 March 2021](#)). In some regions, non-Muslims face immense social pressure to abide by the established Islamic dress codes, especially young Christian schoolgirls and children under 18 who under a recent [ruling](#) (HRW, 1 July 2021) have “no right to choose their clothes.” Surveys also suggest that women experience high levels of sexual harassment while on public transportation and are 13 times more likely to be sexually harassed than men ([The Asean Post, 3 December 2019](#)). In addition to the [women-only train service](#) launched in 2010 (BBC News, 19 August 2010), new women-only bus lines have also been introduced in Jakarta in an attempt to protect female commuters from sexual violence ([Now This News, 28 July 2022](#); [Ankara News, 25 July 2022](#)).

Technological landscape

According to [DataReportal Digital 2024: Indonesia](#) (21 February 2024) / survey date - January 2024:

- **Internet usage:** 66.5% penetration
- **Social media usage:** 49.9% of the total population. 46.5% of Indonesia's social media users were female, while 53.5% were male.
- **Active cellular mobile connections:** 126.8% of the total population

The gender gap in mobile phone ownership and internet use reduced slightly from 10% to 8% between 2020 and 2022, but is now up to 10% and 15% respectively, according to the Global System for Mobile Communications ([GSMA, 2023, p. 17](#)).

According to Freedom House's [Freedom on the Net 2023 Indonesia](#):

- "The state of internet freedom in Indonesia declined during the coverage period, primarily due to the enforcement of Ministerial Regulation No. 5 of 2020 (MR 5/2020), which introduced a content moderation regime that threatens freedom of expression and user privacy. After setting a new deadline for compliance with the law's registration rules in June 2022, the government

temporarily blocked several platforms and websites that had failed to register. Meanwhile, government critics, journalists, and internet users continued to face criminal prosecution, violent attacks, and harassment in retaliation for their online activities. Internet access in the Papua region continues to be routinely disrupted."

- "Increased online harassment, prosecutions, and technical attacks against journalists, activists, and news outlets also deter free expression and information sharing. Civil society organizations have raised concerns that the Virtual Police program will drive more users to practice self-censorship." "Journalists and activists were violently attacked for their online activities; in one case, a bomb exploded in the vicinity of a journalist's home."

Due to Indonesia censoring the Internet and social media, it was only labelled "partly free", noting a decrease by two points in scores. On the other hand, blocking channels due to terrorism-related content has to be seen in relation to the fact that terror and insurgents' attacks are a reality in the country. The government tries to respect rights and freedom, as was illustrated in the post-election violence in Jakarta in May 2019, when all kinds of fake news (including doctored photos) were shared on social media. Instead of shutting everything down completely, the government reacted by slowing down Internet speed for several days and blocked the possibility of uploading and sharing photos and videos. Despite the existing censorship and all other inherent dangers, social media remains for millions of people (especially the younger generation) the source of choice for staying informed.

Freedom House explains: "Geographic disparities in internet access persist in Indonesia, with rural residents typically at a disadvantage, and the cost of service, particularly for fixed-line broadband, remains relatively high. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in 2022, a 5 gigabyte (GB) fixed-line broadband plan cost 6.13 percent of gross national income (GNI) per capita, and a 2 GB mobile broadband plan cost 1.1 percent of GNI per capita. Despite rising penetration rates and improved infrastructure, connectivity remains highly concentrated in the western part of the archipelago, particularly on the more urbanized island of Java. The disparity is evident in the information and communication technology (ICT) development statistics issued by BPS, according to which the country's five eastern provinces received the lowest rankings in 2021. As of February 2023, 26.3 percent of the population lacked internet access, and 2,881 villages were not connected to the internet."

The Internet penetration rate is much higher in urban areas. It should be kept in mind that the comparably small island of Java alone hosts close to 60% of the whole Indonesian population. In a country with 17,000 islands, there are infrastructural challenges for making Internet access possible for everyone. In October 2019, the government announced the finalization of the "Palapa Ring", a massive broadband [infrastructure project](#) spanning more than 12,000 kilometers (Submarine Telecoms Forum, 16 October 2019). Quoting government sources, Freedom House noted that around 21,000 villages had limited access to internet and electricity: "People in Indonesia were more severely impacted by low internet penetration rates and poor infrastructure during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The limited availability of electricity and connectivity in more than 21,000 villages has hindered online home learning activities for students in rural areas." According to Freedom House, Indonesians hold 370.2 million mobile phone subscriptions.

The restriction in Internet access imposed by the state referred to in Freedom House's report is not the only way the state can interfere with media communication. Indonesia's Electronic Information

and Transaction Law (ITE Law in its 2016 revision) can already be used to [curb and restrict](#) free online speech (East Asia Forum, 2 April 2021). International companies like Google and TikTok abided by a [registration](#) demand imposed by Indonesian law (Benar News, 18 July 2022). This law also requires that content causing “unrest in society or disturbs public order” be taken offline within 24 hours after the authorities' notification or within four hours in urgent cases. Observers are speaking of a "[tide of online defamation cases](#)", since a proposed revision of the law failed (Indonesia at Melbourne, 10 May 2022).

Security situation

Christians remain vulnerable to violent attack and radical Islamic thinking is widespread. The suicide attack against the cathedral in Makassar in March 2021 (see below) is a reminder about the potential of violence against the Christian minority and opened fresh wounds and memories of the attacks against [three Christian churches in 2018](#) (CNN, 13 May 2018). The killing and beheading of Christians in Sulawesi in May 2021 added to a feeling of insecurity, although the authorities did investigate the matter and take action.

The security forces in Indonesia confirmed the [killing of Ali Kalora](#) (AP News, 19 September 2021). He was the leader of the East Indonesia Mujahideen group (MIT), which had been responsible for the aforementioned 2021 attacks. Another leader of the group was [killed](#) in January 2022, weakening it further (Jamestown Foundation, 4 January 2022).

Indonesia decided to [ban the return](#) of battle-hardened Islamic State group (IS) militants and their family members from Syria and Iraq. Although this may initially help the authorities in coping with the danger of Islamic extremism, it will not stop the militants from quietly seeping in via the thousands of islands (Reuters, 11 February 2020). It is still hotly debated if and how [Indonesian children](#) of IS radicals should be extricated from camps mainly located in Syria (IPAC, 30 June 2021). How dangerous such an unmonitored return can be, was clearly illustrated in the capture of the town of Marawi in neighboring Mindanao/Philippines in 2017, which was supported by Indonesian Islamic fighters.

An IS-inspired attack took place on Palm Sunday, 28 March 2021, when a newly-wed couple detonated [two bombs](#) at a church service in the cathedral of Makassar, wounding twenty and killing themselves (ASEAN Today, 7 April 2021). Just three days later, a young woman walked into the [national police headquarters](#) in Jakarta and detonated her suicide belt (Jamestown Foundation, 9 April 2021). Such attacks add to a general climate of insecurity, which is more pronounced among religious minorities, although the authorities do carry out investigations and in general try their best to foil such attacks.

While IS would seem to be on the decline in the country, the [danger](#) of splinter groups, 'lone wolves' and new cells is still very present (IPAC, 21 January 2021). The release of convicted Islamic militants also poses a challenge for communities and security authorities alike (concerning [Poso](#) see IPAC report No 86, 27 June 2023; concerning the [Bali bombers](#) see IPAC report No 85, 29 May 2023). The police had warned in 2023 that the [Jemaah Islamiyah](#) movement is regrouping and according to observers, they are still posing a threat (Jamestown Foundation, 21 February 2023). Its founder, Abubakar Baasyir, has been quietly [released from prison](#) and while he may not personally pose a fighting threat anymore (he is in his 80s and in poor health), his ideological influence should not be underestimated (Jamestown Foundation, 12 February 2021). The government's successful anti-Islamist and terrorist policies and the continuing pressure and operations carried out by police and special forces like Densus 88, as

shown by the [arrest](#) of a further 59 militants in December 2023, who were accused of plans to disrupt the 2024 elections (Jamestown Foundation, 12 January 2024), led to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) publicly announcing that it was [dissolving](#) its organization (IPAC, 4 July 2024).

The *Mujahideen Indonesia Timur* (MIT) was thought to be on the decline with possibly less than 10 active fighters. It nevertheless managed to carry out two attacks against villages in Central Sulawesi in November 2020 and May 2021, killing eight Christians. The killing of its leader, Ali Kalora, in September 2021 by security forces (see above: Recent history) dealt MIT a serious blow and the group may have been eradicated as such. However, it remains to be seen if this is the end of MIT or if it will mutate into various radical Islamic splinter groups. It should be noted that security forces [arrested](#) 22 suspected Islamic militants in Central Sulawesi, connected with the MIT and who had pledged allegiance to IS (Reuters, 17 May 2022). The leader of Islamist movement *Jamaah Khilafatul Muslimin* (JKM) has been arrested and faces charges of treason for staging ‘subversive’ motorcycle rallies on 29 May calling for an Islamic caliphate (UCA News, 7 June 2022). The JKM is said to be an offshoot of *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), an Islamist group banned in 2017 also for rejecting the national ideology Pancasila and calling for a caliphate to be set up. According to observers, the [HTI](#) continues to be a challenge for the authorities despite being banned (RSIS, 6 March 2023). Thus, the country is starting to lose its model character of being a successfully democratic country housing a tolerant form of Islam, although it is fighting with some success against violent forms of radical Islam. At the same time, a growing Islamic conservatism in society makes it easier for radical groups to demand accommodation, thus, according to one commentator, the real danger lies in the ‘[democratic backsliding](#)’ of Indonesia (The Interpreter, 14 September 2022).

The police are not generally biased against religious minorities, but appear to be more concerned with keeping the peace in a given community rather than with enforcing the law or constitutional rights. Indonesia's intelligence and counter-terrorism forces are renowned and much more effective than most of its ASEAN peers. Militant Islamic cells are frequently unearthed, so that the largest danger does not seem to come from radical Islamic networks or organizations, but from so-called 'lone wolves'. However, Islamist ideology has clearly made inroads into the country - the preferred avenue for young people being the Internet and social media, which radicals know very well how to use for their purposes. And there are groups like *Jamaah Ansharul Khilafah*, which focus on Islamic mission ("dawah") and act according to the motto "continue to teach and bide your time" (The Diplomat, 13 August 2020).

Apart from religiously motivated radical groups, a 2021 database compiled by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta records all reported [incidents involving violence](#) in Indonesia “including group-on-group violence, such as village conflicts; group-on-individual violence, such as mob attacks; and state-on-group violence, such as violence by law enforcement” (Benar News, 21 June 2022). A report on incidents occurring in 2021 shows that while large-scale attacks may be a thing of the past, so-called “collective violence” is trending upwards. As the [research](#) shows (CVEW, accessed 1 July 2022), in 2021 there were more than 1,200 incidents of collective violence, claiming at least 294 lives, including group-on-group violence. It is also showing that a disproportionate number of incidents occur in the Papua provinces, amounting to four times the national average. The Papua provinces also have the highest number of casualties, with the much more populous provinces of West and East Java registering the next highest.

This is a reminder of another challenge which concerns the Christian minority (and Indonesia as a whole): The situation in Papua. There is a violent insurgency seeking independence (or full autonomy) and the conflict escalated when the head of intelligence for the Papua region was killed on 25 April 2021. The National Liberation Army of West Papua (TPNPB), the armed wing of the separatist Free Papua Movement (OPM) claimed responsibility. A few days later, the government classified these Papuan separatist groups as terrorists ([Benar News, 29 April 2021](#)). While observers doubt this will do anything to solve the conflict, it has allowed the government to bring special forces into the region and it also allows for the anti-terrorist force Densus 88 to become active, a move which has not been taken yet as far as is known. The authorities announced in May 2021 that they had foiled bomb attacks by Islamic radicals against 10 Papuan churches as well as [assassination plots](#) against the Archbishop of Papua (UCA News, 3 June 2021). This illustrates the highly inflammable situation in Papua which may have broader consequences for the whole country. It is highly doubtful whether the creation of [three new provinces](#) in Papua, the plans for which were drawn up in Jakarta without Papuan consultation, will help ease tensions and reduce violence. On the contrary, observers fear an increased militarization following this decision (Benar News, 30 June 2022). An emerging video of Indonesian soldiers [torturing](#) a Papuan separatist fighter in February 2024 were no help in calming the situation, although authorities arrested 13 soldiers and are investigating the case (The Diplomat, 26 March 2024).

Gender perspective

The threat from violent Islamic militancy remains extremely high in Indonesia. Christian men, especially church leaders and Christian converts from Islam, remain vulnerable to attacks from both Islamic militants and the Indonesian government ([HRW, 17 March 2023](#); [UCA News, 7 April 2022](#)).

Christian origins

Searching for the New World and exotic spices, Portuguese merchants came to Indonesia in 1511, firstly to Maluku, in the eastern part of the country. The Portuguese brought with them Roman Catholicism as the first seeds of Christianity in Indonesia.

According to a report compiled by Frederick W H and Worden R L (editors, Washington, 1993) entitled "[Indonesia – A Country Study](#)":

- “Christianity had a long history in the islands, with Portuguese Jesuits and Dominicans operating in the Malukus, southern Sulawesi, and Timor in the sixteenth century. When the Dutch defeated Portugal in 1605, however, Catholic missionaries were expelled and the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church was virtually the only Christian influence in the region for 300 years. Whereas the United East Indies Company (VOC) was primarily a secular and not a religious enterprise, and because Calvinism was a strict, austere, and intellectually uncompromising variety of Christianity that demanded a thorough understanding of what, for Indonesians, were foreign scriptures, Christianity advanced little in Indonesia until the nineteenth century. Only a few small communities endured in Java, Maluku, northern Sulawesi, and Nusa Tenggara (primarily Roti and Timor). After the dissolution of the VOC in 1799, and the adoption of a more comprehensive view of their mission in the archipelago, the Dutch permitted proselytizing in the territory. This evangelical freedom was put to use by the more tolerant German Lutherans, who began work among the Batak of Sumatra in 1861.”

- “The twentieth century witnessed the influx of many new Protestant missionary groups, as well as the continued growth of Catholicism and of large regional and reformed Lutheran churches. Following the 1965 coup attempt, all nonreligious persons were labelled atheists and hence were vulnerable to accusations of harboring communist sympathies. At that time, Christian churches of all varieties experienced explosive growth in membership, particularly among those people who felt uncomfortable with the political aspirations of Islamic parties.”
- “In the 1990s, the majority of Christians in Indonesia were Protestants of one affiliation or another, with particularly large concentrations found in North Sumatra, Irian Jaya, Maluku, Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, and North Sulawesi. Catholic congregations grew less rapidly in the 1980s, in part because of the church's heavy reliance on European personnel. These Europeans experienced increasing restrictions on their missionary activities imposed by the Muslim-dominated Department of Religious Affairs.”

Church spectrum today

Indonesia: Church networks	Christians	%
Orthodox	3,500	0.0
Catholic	8,532,000	23.3
Protestant	21,288,000	58.2
Independent	6,916,000	18.9
Unaffiliated	384,000	1.0
Doubly-affiliated Christians	-515,000	-1.4
Total	36,608,500	100.0
<i>(Any deviation from the total number of Christians stated above is due to the rounding of decimals)</i>		
Evangelical movement	9,967,000	27.2
Pentecostal-Charismatic	11,646,000	31.8

Zurlo G A and Johnson T M, eds., *World Christian Database*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed May 2024

Orthodox: Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Christians who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelical movement:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Pentecostal-Charismatic:** Church members involved in renewal in the Holy Spirit, sometimes known collectively as "Renewalists".

Around a quarter of all Indonesian Christians are Roman Catholic and they are recognized by the country's Constitution as a separate religion (while Protestants are recognized as "Christian"). Geographically, Catholics can be found throughout the archipelago, but they are a majority in the province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) with its island Flores and the Komodo islands (well-known for its

large lizards). Protestants come in a great variety of denominations, some along ethnic lines (like Batak, Manadonese etc.), others crossing ethnic and other boundaries to form Evangelical and - in particular - Pentecostal churches. These are found throughout the country but are more concentrated in eastern areas (such as in Papua and North Sulawesi). At the same time, there are pockets of Christianity in the western part of Indonesia, too, e.g. in Tapanuli in North Sumatra. Due to missionary work by Dutch, Scandinavian and German missionaries in the 19th century, many ethnic church denominations are Reformed or Lutheran (like the Batak, Toraja and others). The ethnic church denominations traditionally used to be limited to their region of origin but nowadays, due to work migration, their churches can be found in the larger cities throughout Indonesia, especially in Metro Jakarta.

Further useful reports

A selection of in-depth reports and smaller articles are available on the Research & Reports pages of the Open Doors website:

- <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/research-reports/>.

These are also available on the Open Doors Analytical website (password: freedom):

- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Indonesia>
- <https://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/>.

External Links

- Recent history: relocation of the capital - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/26/indonesia-new-capital-city-borneo-forests-jakarta>
- Recent history: regional challenges - <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/31/indonesias-asean-leadership-tested-myanmar>
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- Political and legal landscape: safe majority of 71% - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/if-prabowo-gets-majority-party-support-democracy-will-suffer-05022024142641.html>
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- Political and legal landscape: banned - <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/12/30/government-bans-fpi-and-its-activities.html>

- Political and legal landscape: sentenced - <https://apnews.com/article/indonesia-religion-health-coronavirus-pandemic-a4ea57328220910df0686ffdb43c2044>
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- Political and legal landscape: no lack - http://cdn.understandingconflict.org/file/2022/03/Report__76_Extremist_Charities.pdf
- Political and legal landscape: forbid evil - <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/paroled-hardline-indonesian-muslim-cleric-vows-to-fight-on-07202022150808.html>
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