

Elections in Indonesia : Why Jokowi lost provinces, won others in 2019 election

Tuesday 30 April 2019, by [BACHYUL Syofiardi](#), [KAHFI Kharishar](#) (Date first published: 24 April 2019).

While most reputable pollsters show that Joko “Jokowi” Widodo is likely to win the 2019 presidential election, their early vote count results reveal that the incumbent is likely to suffer heavy losses in several provinces, but gain significant support in others.

According to quick counts by several pollsters, including by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Cyrus Network, Jokowi and his running mate, Ma'ruf Amin, had 54 to 56 percent of the vote against contender Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno's 44 to 46 percent.

The official election results will only be announced by the General Elections Commission (KPU) in a month's time, after ballots from all 810,329 polling stations across the country are counted and recapitulated.

The preliminary results based on exit polls confirmed observers' projection that support for Jokowi would be concentrated mainly in the heartland of Java — East and Central Java — Bali, Kalimantan and Papua. Prabowo, on the other hand, won big in Sumatra, as well as Banten and West Java.

The incumbent only won three provinces in Sumatra, namely Riau Islands (51.5 percent), Bangka Belitung Islands (65.1 percent) and Lampung (60.7 percent). Meanwhile, he lost by a large margin in two others, garnering only around 20.8 percent in Aceh and 14.3 percent in West Sumatra.

Jokowi even lost regions he won during the 2014 election against Prabowo, including North Sumatra, Jambi, and Bengkulu.

Bahana Sekuritas chief economist Satria Sambijantoro said the commodity price decline might have contributed to Jokowi's heavy defeat in Sumatra, which is home to vast palm oil plantations.

“People in Sumatra rely heavily on this commodity because [the oil palm industry] creates a huge number of jobs; therefore, the price fluctuation [of the commodity] is very important to them,” Satria told *The Jakarta Post* recently.

“However, the price of crude palm oil has been declining since last year. This affected the incumbent's popularity on the island.”

While the government has taken initiatives and introduced several measures to boost the price of palm oil in the market, Satria said these initiatives did not have an immediate effect on Jokowi's popularity, especially prior to the elections.

This very same factor had helped former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to secure his second tenure in the 2009 presidential election. At the time, the prices of various commodities were on the rise thanks to the United States' financial stimulus package to the international commodity market in the wake of 2008 global financial crisis.

Andalas University political expert Edi Indrizal attributed Jokowi's expected defeat in religiously conservative West Sumatra to a well-preserved negative sentiment against the Indonesia Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), of which Jokowi is a member, due to its historical connection to first president Sukarno — the father of PDI-P chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri — who supported the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the 1960s.

The PDI-P has also been perceived among conservative Muslims in the predominantly Muslim province as the party that endorsed "the blasphemer" former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (BTP), who was sentenced to two years in prison for insulting Islam in 2017. He subsequently lost that year's gubernatorial election. BTP was closely associated with Jokowi as he served as his deputy governor in Jakarta before Jokowi was nominated as the presidential candidate in 2014. These different factors combined, Edi said, contributed to declining support for Jokowi in 2019.

"Ma'ruf Amin's presence as Jokowi's running mate didn't help that much because he is part of Nahdlatul Ulama [NU], while West Sumatra is a strong Muhammadiyah base," Edi said, referring to the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia.

On Sulawesi, Jokowi was expected to win West and Central Sulawesi, but lost South Sulawesi to Prabowo, gaining around 43.2 percent against Prabowo's 56.8 percent in what used to be a key province for Jokowi. In 2014, he and Vice President Jusuf Kalla, the most influential political figure from South Sulawesi, won a staggering 71.41 percent against Prabowo and then-running mate Hatta Rajasa's 28.59 percent, according to KPU South Sulawesi.

Australian National University political scientist Marcus Mietzner highlighted the absence of Kalla as the reason behind Jokowi's defeat in the province.

"Kalla's departure normalized Sulawesi voting patterns. Sulawesi has never been an electoral district that would naturally be drawn to a candidate like Jokowi, so the 2019 collapse of his support in South Sulawesi — and other provinces — removed an anomaly created by Kalla's 2014 candidacy," he said.

Mietzner also highlighted the huge spike in support for Jokowi in Central and East Java, which was caused by political shifts at large NU boarding schools. Ma'ruf is a senior NU cleric.

"There is now greater polarization between the Javanese heartland [of] Central and East Java and other islands with large non-Muslim populations on the one hand, [and] West Java and other Muslim-majority provinces on the other," he said.

"There was also further consolidation along polarization lines on the Outer Islands [...] it appears that much of Sumatra strengthened its support for Prabowo, while the non-Muslim majority provinces went even stronger for Jokowi than last time," he concluded.

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<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/04/24/why-jokowi-lost-provinces-won-others-in-2019-elec>

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