

9-2020

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### Recommended Citation

Mujani, Saiful (2020) "Intolerant Democrat Syndrome: The Problem of Indonesian Democratic Consolidation," *Jurnal Politik*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 1.

DOI: 10.7454/jp.v6i1.1006

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/politik/vol6/iss1/1>

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# Intolerant Democrat Syndrome: The Problem of Indonesian Democratic Consolidation

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## ABSTRAK

Setelah 20 tahun lebih Indonesia menjalani demokratisasi (1998–2020) banyak studi yang berkesimpulan bahwa demokrasi Indonesia setidaknya dalam lima tahun terakhir bukannya terkonsolidasi tapi sebaliknya mengalami kemunduran. Yang diyakini membuat kemunduran tersebut adalah meningkatnya intoleransi politik dalam masyarakat. Namun studi tentang toleransi politik Indonesia selama ini bias sehingga tidak menggambarkan kondisi toleransi umum yang sebenarnya. Tulisan ini menawarkan strategi baru yang tidak bias dalam studi toleransi politik, yakni strategi yang disebut “*content-controlled measures of political tolerance*.” Strategi ini telah digunakan dalam serangkaian survei opini publik nasional dalam periode yang cukup panjang (2004–2019) dan menjadi sumber data yang langka untuk tulisan ini. Hasilnya adalah sebuah temuan baru bahwa preferensi pada demokrasi, sebagai ukuran dari konsolidasi demokrasi pada tingkat sikap, tidak disertai dengan toleransi politik. Bahkan, toleransi politik memperlemah konsolidasi demokrasi. Ini merupakan sebuah gejala yang penulis sebut “*sindrom demokrat intoleran*”: preferensi pada demokrasi dihambat oleh toleransi politik, atau sebaliknya. Sindrom ini akan membuat demokrasi Indonesia sulit terkonsolidasi. Perlu studi lebih lanjut tentang sebab dari munculnya sindrom ini. Penulis menduga bahwa konstitusi sekarang secara sistematis ikut melahirkan sindrom tersebut.

Kata kunci: Konsolidasi demokrasi, toleransi politik, demokrat intoleran, konstitusi, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

Indonesia underwent democratization after more than 20 years (1998–2020), but many studies conclude that the country’s democracy is not consolidated and suffered a setback, at least in the last five years. An increase in political intolerance in society is believed to be the cause of this setback. However, studies on Indonesian political tolerance are biased and thus do not reflect actual conditions of general tolerance. This study offers a new unbiased strategy called “*content-controlled measures of political tolerance*” in the research on political tolerance. This strategy has been used in a series of national public opinion surveys for a relatively long period (2004–2019) and is a source of scarce data for this study. Results present a new finding that preference for democracy, as a measure of democratic consolidation at the attitudinal level, is not accompanied by political tolerance. In fact, political tolerance weakens the consolidation of democracy, which is a symptom of a condition that the author calls the “*intolerant democrat syndrome*.” In this syndrome, preference for democracy is hampered by

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political tolerance and vice versa. This syndrome makes the consolidation of Indonesian democracy difficult. Further research on the causes of the emergence of this syndrome is necessary; however, the author suspects that the current constitution contributes systematically to this syndrome.

Keywords: Democratic consolidation, political tolerance, intolerant democrats, constitution, Indonesia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v6i1.336>

## INTRODUCTION

Researchers with a strong interest in Indonesian politics pay close attention to the country's problem of democratic consolidation. If we follow the regular assessments made by the Freedom House yearly, we can observe that Indonesian democracy is generally not consolidated and shows signs of decline (Freedom House 2020). A number of studies present a similar conclusion (Hadiz 2017; Mietzner 2018; Warburton and Aspinall 2019; Aspinall et al. 2020).

By using freedom as a measure of a country's conditions of democracy, based on the Freedom House assessments for the period of 1998–2005, Indonesia was a partially free country that became a completely free country in the period of 2006–2013 but reverted back to a partially free country at present. This finding means that Indonesia's democracy suffered a setback in the past seven years. According to the Freedom House, the decline of freedom in Indonesia occurred in the component of civil liberties as a concept of freedom. Civil liberties considered to be experiencing a decline include state protection of minority groups, freedom of belief or religion, freedom of opinion, and freedom of the press. Furthermore, a setback can be observed in the state protection of freedom of association. This decline does not indicate the absence of religious freedom, protection of minority groups, and freedom of the press in the country. However, the present quality and intensity of such civil liberties seem to have decreased compared with those in the previous seven years. A number of prior studies show that Indonesia's democracy experienced problems with consolidation after the stagnant 2009 general elections, whereas other studies claim that Indonesia is

currently experiencing a setback (Aspinall and Mietzner 2010; Fealy 2011; Liddle and Mujani 2013).

Indonesia perceives democracy in the sense that free and fair elections at the national and regional levels, which are conducted relatively peacefully and in an orderly manner, are possible. Freedom to compete for public office exists, and citizens are free to choose their leaders. However, democracy involves more than participation in elections or contestation of public offices. According to democratic theorist Robert Dahl, political participation is not a measure of progress toward democracy, and what actually determines the progress of democracy in a country is its citizens' tolerance and ability to accept diversity (pluralism; Dahl 1971).

Political tolerance is not identical with democracy but crucial in a country to make democracy function effectively (Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1993, 5). The stronger the political tolerance in a country is, the better the democratic performance of the country is (Sullivan and Transue 1999). Dahl stated that political tolerance is an essential attitude for democratic stability (Dahl 1997, 36–38). Moreover, Almond and Verba argued that democracy should be a balance between active and passive sides to increase its maturity, where the active side involves political participation and the passive side involves confidence in political institutions (political trust) and political tolerance (Almond and Verba 1963). However, Dahl believed that political participation is not consistently related to democracy and expressed that “In the light of all this we cannot assume that an increase in political activity is always associated with an increase in polyarchy” (Dahl 1956, 89). To help democracy develop and mature, a culture of democracy or a civic culture is necessary in which political tolerance is a major component (Almond and Verba 1963).

Implementing political tolerance in ethnically and religiously plural societies is often difficult because ethnic and religious identities penetrate people's personalities from a very early period (Dahl 1971, 108). Historically, democracy emerged and developed in relatively homogeneous societies in terms of ethnicity and religious beliefs. Therefore,

implementing democracy is difficult for a pluralistic society (Dahl 1971, 108).

Indonesia is a heterogeneous country, especially in terms of religion, race, ethnicity, and locality. Muslims are the majority (87%) but a considerably heterogeneous group, with some orthodox and others heterodox.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, some Muslims tend to be literalists, whereas others are rationalists or mystics. Furthermore, some groups are called *santri*, whereas others are referred to as *abangan*. (Geertz 1960; Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2018).

In terms of ethnicity, Indonesia is extremely diverse, and no ethnic group forms a majority. Javanese is the biggest ethnic group but does not constitute the absolute majority, at only approximately 42% of the total population (Badan Pusat Statistik 2010; Suryadinata, Arifin, and Ananta 2003). Therefore, ethnic and religious diversity is a major challenge for the growth and development of tolerance, which can impact democracy at a certain point. If developing tolerance is difficult owing to diversity, developing democracy will likewise be difficult.

First, this study examines the extent of democratic consolidation and political tolerance in Indonesia. Second, this study presents the results of the analysis on the relationship between political tolerance and democratic consolidation. Third, this study creates a typology of Indonesian groups from the perspective of the aforementioned relationship. For this reason, the concepts of consolidation and political tolerance are defined and measured in advance.

## MEASUREMENTS

According to Linz and Stepan, a democracy is considered consolidated if it exhibits the following three characteristics. 1) At the constitutional level, a democracy is consolidated if all stakeholders agree that differences in interests are resolved according to a constitution built on universal human rights and democratic principles. 2) At the behavioral level, a consolidated democracy is achieved when no one group exerts

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<sup>1</sup> See Badan Pusat Statistik (2010) for religious population in Indonesia.

a significant force in society and acts against democratic principles and rules. 3) At the attitudinal level, a consolidated democracy is attained when the majority of the people demonstrate a preference for democracy over other forms of government (Linz and Stepan 1996). This study is limited to only the third component of the democratic consolidation concept as conducted in numerous case studies of other countries (Foa and Mounk 2016; Inglehart 2016).

In studies on democracy and democratic consolidation at the individual level, preference for a certain regime or form of government is measured by citizens' answer to this question: Which of the three positions do you support? 1) Under certain circumstances, an undemocratic or authoritarian government is acceptable. 2) The form of government is not important, and neither a democracy nor an authoritarian government makes a difference. 3) A democracy is the best form of government despite its imperfections (Linz and Stepan 1996; Norris 1999). At the attitudinal level, a democracy is consolidated if a large majority of citizens believe that democracy, despite not being perfect, is the best form of government.

Meanwhile, tolerance is defined in this study as "the willingness to accept or tolerate someone or something, especially opinions or behavior that you may not agree with, or people who are not like you" (*Oxford Learner's Dictionaries* 2020). In political studies, tolerance is often cited as a "willingness to 'put up with' those things one rejects or opposes" (Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1993, 2). In other words, tolerance is an attitude that allows people with different ideas and practices to enjoy equal rights as citizens. Furthermore, tolerance means respecting and considering humanity as a concept that is more important than any other ideal (Williams and Jackson 2015, 2). In other words, in this study, political tolerance essentially means accepting and recognizing the political rights of people as human beings regardless of their ideologies, beliefs, or backgrounds and social groups, including those considered to have extreme ideologies, those disliked by nearly the entire population, or those who aspire to destroy democracy. Examples of such groups are atheists, Aceh and/or Papua separatists, al-Qaeda jihadists, and commu-

nists. However, despite the strong dislike of people for such groups, their political rights must be recognized, and members should be treated equally as human beings. An individual with intentions to change a nation state into a *khilafah* or to replace democracy with a theocracy is a human being nonetheless. Thus, their right to think, argue, aspire, and act to attain their goals should also be recognized. Moreover, they must be given opportunities to convince the public of their beliefs and ideologies. If their actions involve coercion and violence and/or damage property or injure or kill people, they must be judged and convicted as a criminal. If such an attitude exists in a country, that country embraces political tolerance and vice versa.

In this study, political tolerance is interpreted and measured by replicating the study of Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus, which has become the standard in research on political tolerance in the modern world (Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1993). The measurement strategy presented in the research, which is called “content-controlled measures of political tolerance,” is the most realistic and objective for measuring political tolerance. This method is an alternative to the previous measurement method, which is considered biased against certain groups in society. The old measurement strategy is not objective or neutral; thus, results are biased and do not measure actual political tolerance. An example is the response to the question, “whether you as a Muslim object to Christians running to become regents.” This measurement is biased against certain religious groups, despite religious differences not being the most important issue for determining whether or not a person is tolerant. Does an answer of “no objection” indicate tolerance? Conversely, does an answer of “objection” indicate intolerance?

Given that religious differences are not necessarily a major problem or issue for everyone, bias against one group does not indicate a problem of intolerance. Therefore, the “object,” “content,” or “target” of tolerance must be controlled such that it is not biased against certain groups. For Person A, the target of tolerance may be a certain religious group. For Person B, the target may be an atheist, whereas for Person C it might be sexual orientation. Thus, targets of tolerance are very diverse. What

is tolerated by Person A is not necessarily what is tolerated by Person B. Thus, an objective and realistic measurement is one that can accommodate the diversity of the tolerance target. Such a measurement can be attained by making the target of tolerance as inclusive or open as possible. If the proposed alternatives do not include the most important groups to be tolerated, the respondent is asked to identify a group on their own. If the respondent thinks that no target group of tolerance exists, they are not forced to choose an answer of their least preferred group to be the target of tolerance or intolerance.

A political tolerance measurement with controlled tolerance targets makes the measurement inclusive and measures actual political tolerance over time. For example, if a Muslim is asked whether they object to a Christian making a speech in their neighborhood, if the answer is “yes,” let this response indicate “intolerance.” The following year, the same question is asked to the same person, and if their answer changes to “no,” does it indicate that the person is now tolerant based on the two different answers? The answer is not necessarily because the target of intolerance may have changed and is no longer the Christian who gave a speech in that neighborhood. Perhaps in the following year, the target of intolerance became a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, which was not an issue the previous year and thus was beyond the scope of the respondents’ attention when they were asked the question. For example, if the respondent is against an LGBT parade in their neighborhood but does not mind the speech made by the Christian, they remain intolerant owing to their inability to accept the political rights of the members of the LGBT community or people with similar backgrounds. In other words, the target of tolerance has merely changed. The target of tolerance/intolerance is less important than the fact that tolerance/intolerance exists, regardless of its focus. This inclusive measurement method in terms of target of tolerance is not biased against certain groups and thus represents the value of tolerance. Moreover, the measurement describes the attitude of tolerance or intolerance effectively, as the target can be changed and is not a fixed measurement.



In this study, the measurement of political tolerance is obtained from Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1993) and modified for the Indonesian context, as follows<sup>2</sup>:

Often or common in a society, people do not like certain groups, and may express their dislike in a variety of ways. Maybe there is a group someone disliked the most from many. You may know enough or have heard the following groups in the community. Which of them is the one you dislike the most? If there is none, is there a group in the community that you most dislike that is not on the list? If there is one, please state the name, and I will note it.

List of the groups in the community: (1) Communist Party of Indonesia, (2) Christians, (3) Catholics, (4) Hindus, (5) Buddhists, (6) Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), (7) Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), (8) Shia, (9) Ahmadiyya, (9) Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), (10) Chinese, (11) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, (12) other groups (please specify)...or (13) there is no group that is most disliked.<sup>3</sup>

The respondents who choose one of the most disliked groups are given a number of questions related to the political rights of the members of such groups as citizens. In this study, a citizen's three political rights are their right to become a public officer, such as a regent, governor, or president; right to become a public-school teacher; and right to march in a neighborhood. To measure their level of tolerance, the respondents

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2 In the context of American society, based on expert assessments, Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus listed groups that may be selected as the most disliked as targets of tolerance or intolerance. The list of options includes "I don't know which group is most disliked" (can't decide), "other groups that are not listed here" (fill in the name of the group below...), socialists, fascists, communists, the Ku Klux Klan, the John Birch Society, the Black Panthers, the Symbionese Liberation Army, atheists, proabortionists, or antiabortionists (pro-lifers; Sullivan, Piereson, Marcus 1993, 81).

3 In each survey, the questions are accompanied by alternative semi open answers to inclusively accommodate the diversity of possible responses. The list of potential groups as the most disliked groups is updated according to the development of national issues. For example, in the 2004 survey, ISIS was not included in the list because ISIS had not risen to power at the time. However, the respondents are encouraged to identify groups not mentioned in the questionnaire.

are asked whether they agree or disagree to their disliked individual carrying out their political rights.<sup>4</sup>

The measure of Indonesian political tolerance in previous studies relies extensively on measurement strategies that are biased against certain groups, especially Muslims and their attitude toward non-Muslims, such as Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018; Menchik and Pepinsky 2018; Mujani 2019). This shortcoming does not indicate that the previous approach is useless but that it does not describe the actual state of political tolerance in society. If you are a Muslim and tolerant of a Christian being a member of the House of Representatives, does it mean that you are politically tolerant? Your tolerance for Christians does not necessarily mean that you are a politically tolerant individual. The real question is as follows: are you tolerant toward people with different backgrounds filling the mentioned position, such as an atheist or a member of ISIS? If not, you are considered intolerant because you do not recognize the political rights of an individual who is an atheist or a member of ISIS, despite tolerating Christians. This study tries to approach the signs of political tolerance toward certain groups in an unbiased manner.

## RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA

Similar to most studies on political tolerance and democracy, this research relies on citizens' attitudes collected through public opinion surveys. A series of national public opinion surveys were conducted from 2004 to 2019, and the population of these surveys is adult Indonesians aged 17 years or older or married. To represent the characteristics of the national population, the respondents or samples for these surveys are selected using probability sampling. Appendix 1 provides a complete explanation of the survey methods and data.

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<sup>4</sup> In the survey, the questions are as follows: Do you strongly agree, agree, not have an opinion, disagree, or strongly disagree that your most disliked person can 1) become a public official, 2) teach in a state school, and 3) hold a parade in the area where you live? The respondents who answered "do not know" are categorized as "do not have an opinion."

## FINDINGS

*Democratic Consolidation*

Democratic consolidation at the attitudinal level refers to whether citizens view democracy as the best form of government for their country compared with other forms.<sup>5</sup> Other measurements pay attention to the extent to which citizens agree or disagree that democracy is the best government system despite its imperfections. Citizens who agree or strongly agree with this idea indicate that democracy is consolidated at the individual attitudinal level. If a large majority of the citizens of a country show a preference for democracy, democracy is consolidated at the level of the country's attitude (Linz and Stepan 1996).

Within a period of 2004–2019 the national population generally agreed that democracy is the best form of government despite its imperfections. This attitude was 87.6% in 2004 but dropped to 78% in 2010. However, the majority had a positive view of democracy. The questions were changed in the 2013 and subsequent surveys. Specifically, citizens were asked to choose between three choices: preference for democracy or nondemocracy or no preference. Despite the change in this question, the majority of the citizens selected the view that democracy is the best form of government despite its imperfections. In 2013 survey, 58.1% of the respondents preferred democracy, and in the last survey, which was in 2019, 78.1% of the respondents favored this preference. Moreover, less positive assessments toward nondemocratic or authoritarian systems are observed. In addition, remarkably few respondents who are not concerned about the form of government, whether a democracy

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<sup>5</sup> In the surveys, the questions differed. In the 2004–2010 survey, the question is as follows: “How much do you agree or disagree with the view that democracy compared with other forms of government is the best?” The choices are “strongly agree,” “agree,” “do not know or have no opinion,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree.” Answering “agree” or “strongly agree” means that the respondent prefers democracy. In the next survey, the question is, “Which of the three views do you support? 1. Under certain circumstances, a nondemocratic government system is acceptable. 2. It doesn't matter what the form of government is. Neither a democracy nor a nondemocracy makes any difference. 3. Although it is not perfect, a democracy is the best compared with other forms of government.” Choosing number 3 indicates preference for democracy. Given that the form of the survey questions in the two periods differs, the results cannot be compared directly but are adequate to determine whether the citizens' responses are within the range supporting or preferring democracy.

or a nondemocracy (Table 1), are observed. According to Linz and Stepan, the large proportion of the majority considering democracy as the best political system is a sign that democracy is consolidated at the level of the citizens (Linz and Stepan 1996). The large proportion of preference for democracy demonstrates that Indonesian democracy is consolidated at the attitudinal level. This finding is only one aspect of democratic consolidation. Other aspects, specifically, the constitutional and behavioral aspects, are also very important. However, separate studies are required to measure such dimensions.

Table 1. Trend of Citizens' Preference for Democracy versus Other Regimes, 2004–2019 (%)

Democracy is the best system (preference for democracy)		N	Disagree/strongly disagree	Do not know	Agree/strongly agree	Total	
							Year
		2004	1183	2,3	10,1	87,6	100,0
		2007	1240	4,4	10,6	85,0	100,0
		2010	1320	4,8	17,2	78,0	100,0
				Nondemocracy/authoritarianism is acceptable	Makes no difference	Democracy is the best system	
		2013	1220	12,3	29,5	58,1	100,0
		2017	1556	6,1	19,9	74,0	100,0
		2018	2119	6,9	21,7	71,4	100,0
		2019	2285	5,9	16,0	78,1	100,0

This study examines the relationship between democratic consolidation and political tolerance. Democratic consolidation at the attitudinal dimension shows that Indonesia's democracy is consolidated. However, is this finding supported by political tolerance? How far is attitude toward democracy related to political tolerance? If the relationship between the two concepts is positive, democracy is accompanied by tolerance, thereby strengthening democracy. Conversely, if the relationship between the two concepts is negative, Indonesian democracy is not distributed or accompanied by political tolerance. If this situation occurs, Indonesia's democracy consolidation will be fragile. In fact, Indonesian democracy is currently experiencing consolidation difficulties.

### *Political Tolerance*

Before the relationship between individual preference for democracy and political tolerance is identified, the number of citizens naming a group or groups in society they like the least should be determined. Next, how tolerant Indonesian citizens are in terms of political aspects toward their least-liked group or groups is determined by the question, “How far would you ‘allow’ people from your least-liked group or groups to have political rights as citizens?” For example, if a respondent mentions LGBT individuals as the people they dislike most, would they allow LGBT individuals to run for parliament? On one hand, if they allow this situation to occur despite stating their dislike for LGBT groups, they are a politically tolerant person. On the other hand, if they do not allow this situation to occur, they are an intolerant citizen because they are obstructing the political rights of other citizens who are part of the LGBT community.

In the series of surveys conducted over 15 years, a majority of the Indonesian citizens identify a group or groups in society they dislike most. However, the majority’s attitudes fluctuated considerably during the 2004–2019 period. In the surveys from 2004 to 2007, the percentage of the respondents who most disliked a group or groups in the community was very high, reaching 81%. However, this percentage declined significantly to 58.1% in 2010 and dropped to 51.9% in 2013. In the 2017–2019 survey, this percentage increased once again. In the last survey (2019), the percentage rose to 80.5% or to the figure during the past 15 years (2004; Figure 1).

Which group in society is least liked? Numerous groups, identities, or organizations exist in a community, which change from time to time. Therefore, the choices should be as broad and free as possible to determine the most disliked target group. The list of groups presented in each survey is based on the assessment of *well-informed persons* on groups potentially referred to as least-liked groups owing to historical and political reasons, state ideologies, beliefs, traditions, norms, and the opinions that people hold and developed in society. The groups should

be updated consistently according to time periods or the changing opinions of society, especially those discussed by mass media.

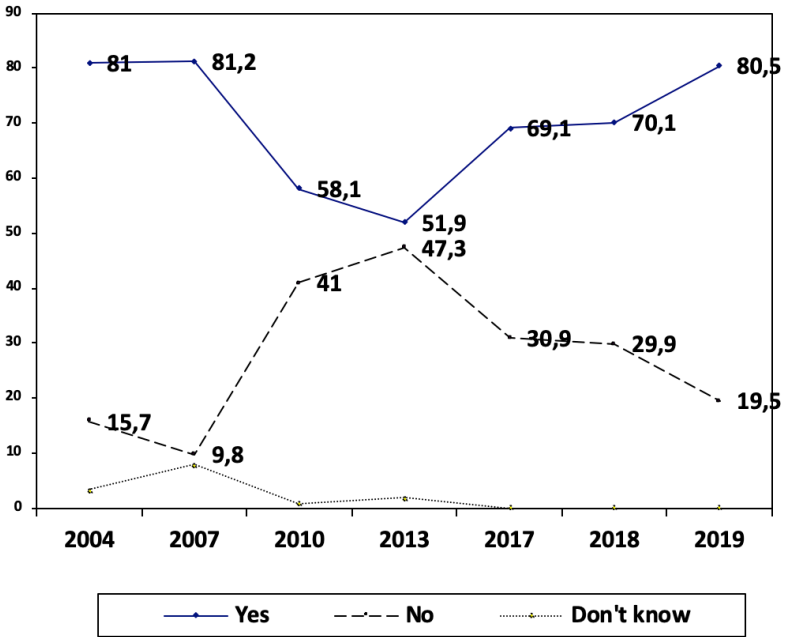


Figure 1. Trend of Existence of Least-liked Groups in Society (%)

Similar to the question raised in the previous section, the groups vary in terms of sociopolitical backgrounds, namely, the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), the Darul Islam or Islamic State of Indonesia (DI/II), the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), ISIS, the Chinese, Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, Judaism, Ahmadiyya and Shia, the LGBT community, and other groups. Groups most likely to become the target of dislike can also change from time to time based on sociopolitical developments in society. Observations should be as inclusive as possible from time to time to provide a basis for measuring the general level of tolerance in society.

Among these groups, the PKI is often mentioned as the least-liked group, despite percentages decreasing in subsequent surveys. In the 2004 survey, 70.9% of the citizens named the PKI as their least-liked

group. This percentage declined steadily to 14% in the 2019 survey. After the PKI or communists, Jews were often identified as the least-liked group, though percentages fluctuated. The Christians followed the Jews, but percentages were relatively small and tended to be stable (Figure 2). The other groups, which were numerous, were chosen less frequently.

Until 2013, no new groups with the potential to become the least liked were added based on public opinion. Opinions on the LGBT community appear only in the 2017 survey, and news concerning political movements abroad was quite dominant, drawing public attention at home, especially on ISIS. The PKI or communists also remain a public issue, especially before the two presidential elections in 2014 and 2019 and presently (Mansur 2020).

In the 2017 and subsequent surveys, a considerable number of respondents mentioned ISIS and the LGBT community as their least-liked groups, which were named more than the PKI. In the 2017–2019 surveys, ISIS was named more than the PKI as the least-liked group (Figure 2). Similarly, the LGBT community was identified more than the PKI/communists. In the most recent survey, atheists were also mentioned by a relatively high number of citizens (11.5%). In the 2010 and 2013 surveys, opinions on the PKI as the least-liked group declined consistently, probably owing to new groups receiving public attention. Without the emergence of new groups competing with the PKI, negative sentiments toward this group continued to decline.

Citizens having opinions on the existence of least-liked groups is normal. People are not angels, and admitting that least-liked groups exist in society does not automatically show intolerance. However, it can be a sign of “potential” for the emergence of political intolerance, which can be explored further.

To ascertain whether the opinion that “there is a group in society that is least liked” is an intolerant or tolerant political attitude, a series of questions are raised to reveal intolerance or tolerance. In this study, political tolerance or intolerance is measured by the degree to which individuals agree or disagree that an individual from their least-liked

group can 1) become a public official or state official, such as the president, a governor, a regent, a member of parliament (national and local), a village chief, and other positions; 2) teach or become a teacher in a state school; and 3) hold a parade in the neighborhood. These three activities are included as citizens' political rights and related to public interest.

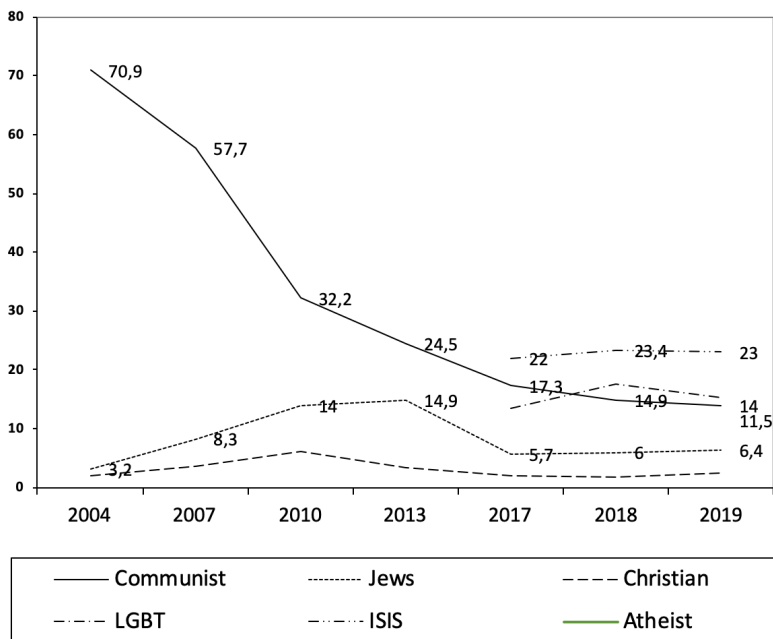


Figure 2. Trend of Least-liked Groups in Society (%)

Figure 3 shows the trend of level of tolerance or intolerance of Indonesians in 2004–2019. From the series of surveys during that period, the number of citizens who disagreed or strongly disagreed against people from their least-liked groups becoming public officials, marching in surrounding areas, and becoming teachers in public schools was relatively volatile.<sup>6</sup> In other words, tendency toward tolerance or intolerance fluctuated during that period.

<sup>6</sup> Each item in the surveys uses an ordinal scale ranging from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). For simplicity, the scores of the three items are summed up and averaged to create a



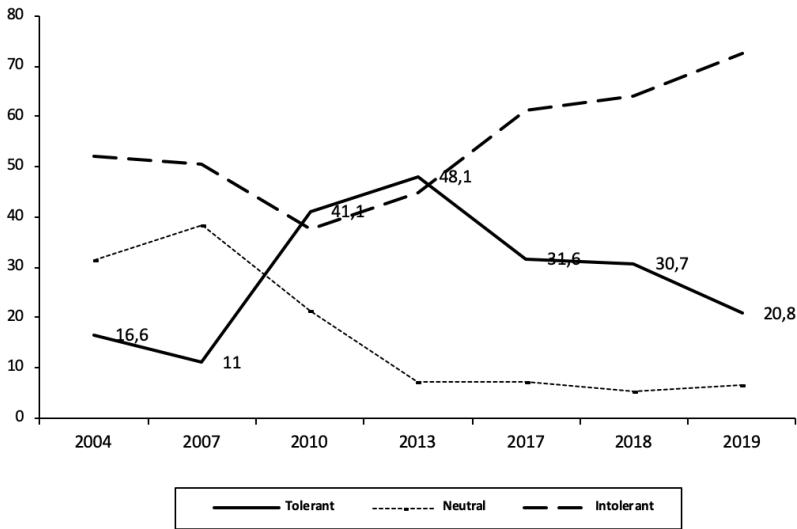


Figure 3. Trend of Political Tolerance (%)

In 2004 and 2007, the tolerance percentage was only 16.6% and 11%, respectively. In 2010, the percentage increased significantly to 41.1% and rose to 48.1% in 2013. In 2017, 2018, and 2019, the percentage dropped to 31.6%, 30.7%, and 20.8%, respectively (Figure 3). Although tolerant individuals outnumbered intolerant individuals in the past (2010–2013), Indonesians can be considered generally intolerant in terms of their political life in the long term. Moreover, Indonesia’s political tolerance in the period of 2017–2019 experienced a setback after achieving a relatively satisfactory state. Indonesian citizens generally do not tolerate the political rights of citizens from least-liked groups. The political rights of atheists, communist, or members of the PKI, ISIS, and the LGBT community are least recognized.

As stated above, political tolerance is believed to be extremely important to democracy consolidation. In other words, the more tolerant a

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tolerance index on a scale of 1 to 5 (from very intolerant to very tolerant). To enhance readability, the index tolerance trend is divided into three categories: intolerant, with the score below 1.67; neutral, with a score between 1.67 and 3.34; and tolerant, with a score of more than 3.34. Thus, the percentage of the intolerant, neutral, and tolerant trend is observed. The respondents who answered “do not know” are categorized as neutral, and those who answered “there is no group that is the least liked” in the beginning are considered “tolerant.”

citizen, the stronger their preference for democracy, and this preference is a measure of democratic consolidation at the level of individual attitudes. Conversely, the more intolerant a citizen is, the weaker is their preference for democracy. However, is this finding true in Indonesian society?

### *Intolerant Democrat Syndrome*

The answers to the question raised above show that this situation is not the case. In general, political tolerance and preference for democracy are negatively correlated (Table 2). The more tolerant a citizen is, the less their preference for democracy is, or the more the preference of a citizen for democracy is, the higher their intolerance is. This pattern is consistent in the surveys from one time period to another (Table 2). Although the negative correlation between the two concepts is not statistically significant initially (2004–2007), it later becomes very significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Based on the combined analysis of the pooled data, in general, the correlation between political tolerance and preference for democracy is negative and statistically significant (Table 2).

Table 2. Preference for Democracy and Political Tolerance (Pearson Correlation)

Survey	Correlation	Sig.	N
2004	-0.047	0.110	1,183
2007	-0.044	0.126	1,240
2010	-0.110	0.000	1,320
2013	-0.090	0.002	1,220
2017	-0.095	0.000	1,556
2018	-0.147	0.000	2,119
2019	-0.096	0.000	2,285
Combined 2004–2019	-0.119	0.000	10,923

If preference for democracy over another system that can be considered an autocracy is linked to tolerance versus intolerance and neutrality, four types of Indonesian citizens emerge, that is, tolerant democrats, intolerant democrats, tolerant autocrats, and intolerant autocrats (Table 3). Tolerant democrats are citizens who prefer democracy and are tolerant or allow members of their least-liked groups to have political rights as citizens. Meanwhile, intolerant democrats are citizens who prefer democracy but are intolerant in their political life. Furthermore, toler-

ant autocrats are citizens who prefer autocracy but are tolerant in terms of their political life. The last type, that is, intolerant autocrats, prefer autocracy and are intolerant. These last two types are relatively small in number.

Table 3. Typology of Citizens Based on Preference for Government System and Political Tolerance

	System of government	Democracy	Autocracy
Political tolerance	Tolerant	Tolerant democrats	Tolerant autocrats
	Intolerant/neutral	Intolerant democrats	Intolerant autocrats

Tolerant democrats are generally fewer in number than intolerant democrats. Despite fluctuating tendencies, the percentage of tolerant democrats is consistently lower than that of intolerant democrats (Figure 4). The number of tolerant democrats increased in 2010 and 2013 but decreased subsequently. This pattern of fluctuation is consistent with the fluctuations in the proportion of political tolerance in general and with the pattern of fluctuations in the existence of least-liked groups in society, as stated above.

From the observations of nearly 15 years, this study determines that Indonesian citizens generally prefer democracy as the best system of government. This preference tends to increase yearly. Conversely, support for other systems of government that are not a democracy, authoritarian, or an autocracy and citizens who do not value the importance of differences between a democracy and other forms of government are relatively few. This tendency is decreasing and illustrates that at the level of citizens' attitudes, Indonesian democracy is consolidated.

However, the consolidation of democracy at this attitudinal level is threatened by political tolerance. Using a highly inclusive approach to observe political tolerance, this study finds that Indonesian citizens are generally intolerant. In 2010-2013 tolerant people outnumber intolerant people, but decline sharply to intolerance in further developments.

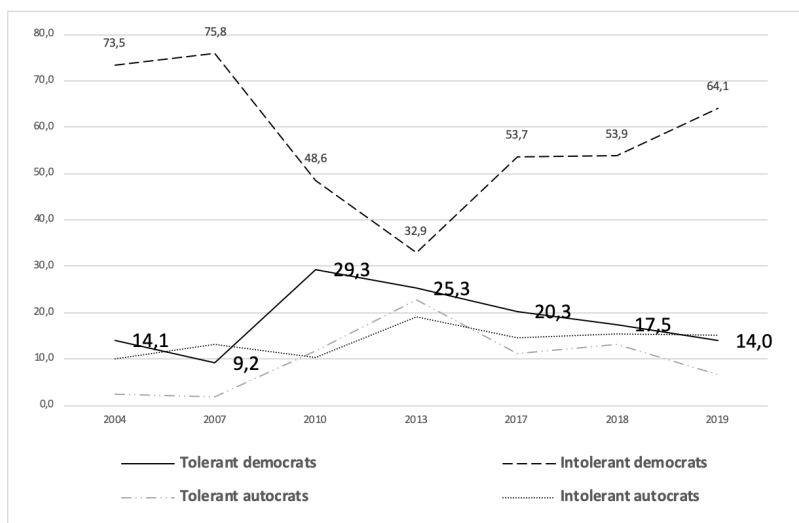


Figure 4. Trend of types of citizens (%)

In Indonesia, during the study period, preference for democracy was not parallel with political tolerance. Preference for democracy tended to be high and increasing, whereas political tolerance was low and fluctuating. After further examination, this study determines that political tolerance generally has a negative correlation with democratic consolidation at the attitudinal level (Table 2). The relationship between the two concepts results in a phenomenon that the author calls “intolerant democrat syndrome.” The syndrome describes the proportion of citizens with the highest preference for democracy but unaccompanied by political tolerance. Moreover, political tolerance weakens preference for democracy and vice versa; specifically, preference for democracy weakens political tolerance. This syndrome is a political complication at the citizen level. The implication of this phenomenon is that despite Indonesia’s implementation of democracy, it likely cannot be improved or significantly consolidated owing to obstacles to political tolerance.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm the assessment or rating of the state of Indonesian democracy, which is regularly carried out by the Freedom House, using different methods. The Freedom House relies on the assessments of a number of experts or well-informed individuals on Indonesian politics, whereas this article relies on public opinions, which are commonly used in studies on the state of democracy and political tolerance in the world, such as the World Value Survey, the Latinobarómetro, the Afrobarometer, the Arab Barometer, and the Asian Barometer Survey.

The Freedom House believes that Indonesia made significant progress in terms of freedom, which is the basic concept of democracy, from being “not free” before the reformation to “partly free” in the early reformation period (1999–2005) to “free” in the period of 2006–2013 but suffered a setback by returning to being “partially free” subsequently (Freedom House 2020). This pattern is highly consistent with the findings of this study.

A number of other studies present a similar interpretation that Indonesian democracy declined at least in the last five years (Hadiz 2017; Menchik 2019; Warburton and Aspinall 2019; Aspinall et al. 2020; Mietzner 2020). The reasons for this decline are related to the issue of civil liberties or tolerance and pluralism. This study systematically confirms the problem of weak political tolerance using a new approach that is not biased against certain groups.

Moreover, the main contribution of this study is the finding of the *intolerant democrat syndrome*, which indicates that citizens’ preference for democracy is not accompanied by political tolerance and that political tolerance weakens preference for democracy, and vice versa. This syndrome is a type of complication that can hinder Indonesian democracy from becoming truly consolidated.

Further systematic study is necessary to find the source of this intolerant democrat syndrome. Similar to the case of tolerance in numerous Western European countries and in Russia, least-liked groups with deep historical roots exist in society. In the case of Western Europe,

citizens who consider the Nazis as their least-liked group in society do not tolerate people affiliated with Nazis having political rights as citizens, and those who are intolerant demonstrate a preference for democracy or positive attitudes toward the value of democracy (Duch and Gibson 1992). In other words, tolerance weakens democracy. This negative relationship pattern increased owing to the Nazi's long and negative history in Western Europe. Western European democrats are politically intolerant when the targets of tolerance are the Nazis and other right-wing extremists.

Similar symptoms can be observed in Russia (Gibson 1998). In this country, communism has a deep history and ended with the angry attitudes and behaviors of the citizens toward the ideology. In the transparent era, with the collapse of communism in the country, people developed deep negative impressions on the communist regime. Therefore, it was not tolerated. Russian citizens who support democracy do not tolerate the political rights of citizens affiliated with communist groups or those with communist ideals. Owing to this situation, tolerance in the country does not strengthen its democracy.

The emergence of the intolerant democrat syndrome phenomenon in Indonesia is similar to the situation that occurred in Western Europe and Russia. Groups in the community widely cited as the least-liked groups are the PKI, atheists, ISIS, and the LGBT community.

The PKI or communists in Indonesia have a long and deep history. Similar to the Nazis in Europe and communists in Russia, the communist party in Indonesia ceased with conflict and violence at the expense of numerous people from both sides. Moreover, the PKI became an illegal party, and communism was officially banned by the state. The Provisional People's Consultative Assembly Decree, which banned the PKI and its associated ideology, remains valid and serves as the legal basis for the prohibition of the ideology or activities supporting or sympathizing with the PKI.<sup>7</sup> The constitutional basis for banning communism in Indonesia is also contained in the current State Consti-

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<sup>7</sup> For studies on the PKI or communists in Indonesia, see Mortimer (2006). <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-indonesia-communism-idUKKBN1FD18H>.

tution, which is the result of amendments during the reformation era (Vebriyanto 2020). The PKI is also used as a political instrument for mass mobilization and to obtain sympathy from the masses, many of whom are believed to be anticommunist (Lamb 2017).

Indonesian citizens who prefer or support democracy do not necessarily have to tolerate communist groups or ideologies because this group has a long history and has been stigmatized through the years. Many Indonesians likely believe that communists and their ideologies should not exist in Indonesia. Communists having political rights is not tolerated. In society, believing that everyone has the right to compete for mass support regardless of their political beliefs, including communism, is rare. A general judgment that communists and other least-liked groups should be outside the arena of competition exists. Indonesian democrats might be tolerant if the target of tolerance is not individuals with communist backgrounds or least-liked groups.

Communism or the PKI is a leftist ideology or political group. By contrast, a political group with right-wing ideologies is ISIS.<sup>8</sup> Since its emergence in the Middle East in 2014, many Indonesians have become aware of ISIS through mass media. Some Indonesians sympathize with and have joined this political movement by going to Syria (Rizki 2018). However, Indonesians generally do not sympathize with ISIS, and many identify it as their least-liked group.

Ideas and movements such as ISIS are not new in Indonesian history. Before the emergence of ISIS, groups and movements sharing similar aspirations existed in Indonesian society, which led to the establishment of an Islamic state. Several such groups fought to be recognized through violent means. An example of such groups is the Darul Islam (“Islamic state”) or DI/Islamic Army of Indonesia (TII), which evolved into the Negara Islam Indonesia or Islamic State of Indonesia (NII).<sup>9</sup> At present, certain people still support the DI/TII (Mappapa 2019).

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<sup>8</sup> See Gerges (2016) and Byrd (2017) for a summary and review of numerous important works on ISIS.

<sup>9</sup> For additional information on the DI/TII, see van Dijk (1981).

Although the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia HTI does not identify itself with the DI/TII or ISIS, it has similar aims, including the establishment of an Islamic state (*khilafah*) and a society based on Sharia law. The HTI is also an ideology and movement that originated in the Middle East, similar to ISIS. Following the fate of the DI/TII, HTI is now officially banned in Indonesia (Rizqa 2017).

Although it has the same ideals as ISIS and has existed in Indonesia for a long time, the DI/TII is not widely identified as a least-liked group in society, and its percentage is far below that of the PKI and ISIS. This finding may be observed because the group has been banned and thus has become part of history. The HTI is also not widely identified as a most-disliked group compared with ISIS perhaps because it is known as a peaceful political movement despite its aspirations to establish a *khilafah* or an Islamic state, similar to ISIS. Meanwhile, ISIS is a political group and movement that uses violence and wages wars and reported on a massive scale by mass media. Such characteristics are a source of increased negative attitudes toward ISIS.

The LGBT community should be highlighted. Why is the LGBT community one of the least-liked groups in society, and why do citizens not tolerate the political rights of individuals associated with this group? A specific study on this problem is necessary.<sup>10</sup> The term “LGBT” is widely used and has received attention since 2016 (Wijaya 2020). No historical record exists stating that the LGBT community is a physical threat to people and the country. Conversely, the LGBT community has been increasingly accepted by the global community, and the political rights of its members have been increasingly recognized. The PKI, ISIS, or other extreme right-wing organizations might be perceived as physically and politically threatening; however, this perception may not be the case with the LGBT community. Hypothetically, intolerance of the political rights of citizens with LGBT backgrounds comes from traditions or values found in society. These values may derive from religion or the dominant interpretation of Indonesian laws and the constitution (Iskandar 2016; Sujana, Setyawati, and Ujanti 2018; Wijaya 2020).

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<sup>10</sup> Regarding LGBT communities in Indonesia, see, for example, Wijaya (2020).



The PKI and ISIS are groups that are not accommodated by the Indonesian constitution. Moreover, the Pancasila and amended 1945 Constitution do not accommodate ideologies and groups such as the PKI and ISIS, as both are considered unconstitutional. The constitutional framework introduced in society systematically shapes citizens' political attitudes and determines which sociopolitical groups are acceptable or unacceptable, and whether their political rights should be recognized (Menchik 2014; Iskandar 2016). Further research on the importance of the constitutional framework in shaping the political attitudes and tolerance of citizens toward least-liked groups, such as the PKI and ISIS, is necessary. From an institutional perspective, institutions such as the constitution are crucial in shaping the political processes, results, attitudes, and behaviors of citizens (North and Weingast 1989; Hall and Taylor 1996). The Indonesian constitution can also be a source of discrimination against the LGBT community because the constitution requires citizens to believe in one God, whereas the behaviors of members of the LGBT community can be interpreted as contrary to religious norms and beliefs. In other words, the dominant understanding of religion is likely a source of discrimination against the LGBT community, and this understanding is sought for its legitimacy in the Indonesian constitution to claim anti-LGBT sentiments as constitutional.

Officially, Indonesia embraces democracy. The Indonesian constitution also serves as the foundation for the existence of Indonesian democracy and its functions. This idea is why democracy is generally considered positive, normatively justified, and has become the people's preference. However, the constitution does not accommodate and tolerate and prohibits certain ideologies and/or groups in society, such as the PKI, ISIS, atheists, and the LGBT community. The constitution shapes the type of democracy adopted in Indonesia, which is a democracy that is not adequately inclusive of all groups in society (Iskandar 2016). Nevertheless, a view exists that the constitution forms tolerant attitudes and behaviors to a certain degree (Ramage 1995; Ellison 2010; Sujana, Setyawati, and Ujanti 2018; Menchik 2019). Owing to this view, the

relationship between the constitution and political tolerance is inconclusive and requires further research.

## CONCLUSION

Numerous studies suggest that Indonesian democracy is experiencing a decline. One reason for this setback is the lack of development of pluralism and political tolerance among the elite and the masses. Is it true that Indonesian citizens are politically intolerant and ultimately hinder the development of Indonesian democracy? This study addresses this problem systematically with a political tolerance approach and measurement that are not biased against certain sociopolitical groups. The results generally describe a condition of political tolerance in Indonesian society for a relatively long period, that is, 2004–2019. This study determines that Indonesian citizens are generally politically intolerant.

Another contribution of this study is the discovery of the symptoms of the intolerant democrat syndrome in most citizens. Citizens prefer democracy over other forms of government but are politically intolerant. This pattern refutes the findings of many studies that political tolerance strengthens democracy. The existence of the intolerant democrat syndrome is evidence against this finding. This syndrome is a political complication in society that makes the consolidation of Indonesian democracy difficult. Thus, the main source of this complication should be explored further. One possibility that must be tested is that the Indonesian constitution is a source of the emergence of the intolerant democratic syndrome because it accommodates and legitimizes democracy for Indonesia but is not adequately inclusive to accommodate the diversity of interest groups in society. As a result, political tolerance cannot grow properly to encourage a consolidated Indonesian democracy.

## APPENDIX: METHODS AND DATA

This study relies on public opinion surveys, which are commonly used in many studies on democratic consolidation at the attitudinal level and political tolerance. In the period of 2004–2019, a series of national

surveys were conducted with a sample population of Indonesian citizens aged 17 years and over or married.

To obtain representative samples of the characteristics of the Indonesian population, complex sampling techniques are used based on a combination of strata and clusters. For this reason, the national population is first stratified by province, area (rural or urban), and gender to make the sample varied and close to the population characteristics. At the same time, population clustering is performed to make this survey efficient. The first cluster is the village/subdistrict, the second cluster is the *Rukun Tetangga* (RT), and the third cluster is the family card (KK). The four respondents in the KK are chosen using the Kish grid.

After the number of respondents in one survey is determined (in this study, this number varies between 1,200 and 2,400), respondents from every province are randomly selected according to the population of each province. Given that the village is used as the primary sampling unit in each survey and 10 respondents are interviewed in each village, the number of villages in each province is randomly selected based on the number of respondents selected. As West Java has the largest population in the country, the number of respondents from West Java is the highest. By contrast, the population of West Papua, or then North Kalimantan, is the lowest; thus, the number of respondents from this province is also the fewest, and so on.

After one village/subdistrict in a province is chosen randomly, an RT list is made for that village, and five RTs are chosen randomly. All the households in the selected RTs are listed; two households are then chosen randomly. In the chosen KK, one person is selected using a male Kish grid or meeting to be interviewed. The response rate for each survey varies but is as low as 81.6%.

The interviews are conducted by trained interviewers. An interviewer is responsible for questioning 10 respondents. Each interviewer is supervised by a regional coordinator, with spot checks conducted for 20% of the total number of respondents and telephone checks conducted for 50% to ensure that the interviews are conducted according to standard operating procedures. The 2004–2010 survey was conducted by Lem-

baga Survei Indonesia, and the 2013–2019 survey was conducted by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting.

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