

# [***Ex-army strongman leader claims victory in Indonesian presidential election***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BB6-NC01-JBSS-S007-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; A former army general with a controversial past has claimed victory in Indonesia's presidential election.

Unofficial results show Prabowo Subianto, 72, winning nearly 60% of the vote - enough to avoid a presidential runoff - with around 85% of votes counted, according to state-owned news organization Antara, CNN affiliate CNN Indonesia and Reuters, which are reporting early counts done by a series of non-government think tanks. Ballot stations closed across the country early on Wednesday afternoon.

Prabowo, billed as the frontrunner ahead of Wednesday's contest, told supporters in Jakarta, he and running mate Gibran Rakabuming Raka, who is the eldest son of President Joko Widodo, would govern "for all the people of Indonesia."

"Although we are grateful, we must not be arrogant, we must not be euphoric, we must remain humble. This victory must be a victory for all Indonesian people," Prabowo declared. "I will lead together with Gibran to nurture, protect and defend all the people of Indonesia, regardless of tribe, ethnic group, race and religion and social background, the people of Indonesia are our responsibility to protect."

Popular former governor Anies Beswadan was running second with fewer than 22% of the votes, with rival Ganjar Pranowo in third, according to the unofficial early count.

Both their teams have disputed the early results and said it is too early to call the election, according to party spokespeople quoted by Reuters.

CNN cannot independently verify the early polls, though counts by reputable thinktanks have proved accurate during previous Indonesianelections.

During his speech Wednesday, Prabowo called for supporters to "calmly wait" for the official vote to be declared by the country's election commission, which will publish its official results in March.

Deadly riots broke out after the last election in 2019 when Prabowo, who lost, contested the results.

Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country and home tothe world's largest Muslim population. More than 200 million people across 38 provinces were eligible to cast their votes on Wednesday, in what was billed as the world's biggest single-day election.

However, runninga vote in the [*world's largest archipelagic nation*](https://kemlu.go.id/vancouver/en/pages/indonesia_at_a_glance/2016/etc-menu#:~:text=Indonesia%20at%20a%20Glance,-%E2%80%8B&text=INDONESIA%2C%20the%20largest%20archipelago%20in,which%20about%206%2C000%20are%20inhabited.) is a huge effort. The country is wider than the United States and straddles three time zones. It is made up of over 18,000 islands and islets, of which 6,000 are inhabited, and over 150 languages spoken across its breadth.

Young voters have been key to this year's vote, experts note, with around half of registered voters being under the age of 40, according to the [*General Election Commission.*](https://www.kpu.go.id/berita/baca/11702/dpt-pemilu-2024-nasional-2048-juta-pemilih)

Gibran, who took the stage after Prabowo, acknowledged the impact of youth voters in during the election, telling supporters that in "the future we will involve young people."

What will a Prabowo presidency mean?

Prabowo hails from an elite political family and his past is controversial, especially his time during years of the late dictator [*Suharto*](https://cnn.com/2024/02/12/asia/suharto-deepfake-ai-scam-indonesia-election-hnk-intl/index.html), who was also his former father-in-law. Accusations of human rights violations in his military past have dogged him throughout his political career.

His father Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, was a former Finance and Trade minister and his grandfather Margono founded the state Bank Negara Indonesia and led a presidential advisory council.

He enrolled in Indonesia's Military Academy in 1970 and went on to become a special forces commander where he led missions against pro-independence groups during Indonesia's ruthless 24-year military occupation of East Timor.

He is also alleged to have ordered the kidnapping of pro-democracy activists in the final months of Suharto's authoritarian regime.

He has since transformed himself into a supporter of Indonesia's vibrant democracy, building an image more recently as a friendly but dependable grandfather figure, and has been a major player within ***politics*** over the last decade.

He ran for president in 2014 and 2019 but lost both times to outgoing president Joko Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi.

The two former rivals then shelved their differences when Jokowi brought Prabowo into his cabinet as defense minister.

This year, he teamed up with Jokowi's eldest son Gibran Rakabuming Raka as his vice presidential pick - a controversial decision that also sparked heated criticism of Jokowi over alleged interference as he prepares to leave the presidency.

"It is widely expected for the president to remain neutral in elections," said Leena Rikkila Tamang, Asia Pacific Director at International IDEA. "A Prabowo win will also be seen as "a continuation of Jokowi's policies."

Prabowo's popularity has risen since the 2019 election, experts note, owing largely to Jokowi's tacit support.

Jokowi, who came from humble origins and campaigned as a break from Indonesia's traditional wealthy elites, oversaw impressive economic growth and will leave office popular. But Indonesia also backslid on human rights and on corruption indexes during his time in office. Prabowo very much positioned himself as a successor to Jokowi's legacy.

"Concerns (about a Prabowo presidency) will focus on the potential for an increase in illiberal actions as he has previously advocated for removing presidential term limits, ending direct presidential elections and curtailing human rights protections," said Laura Schwartz, Senior South East Asia Analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft. "Such developments would dent Indonesia's reputation and its ability to attract foreign investment."

Zachary Abuza, a professor in Southeast Asian ***politics*** and security issues at the National War College in Washington, DC, told CNN Prabowo "has worked really hard to reinvent himself and to whitewash his past."

Having a former military man at the helm could signal a return to the dark days of authoritarian rule, he added. "Jokowi surrounded himself with many army generals and had a tendency to 'securitize' many problems such as the (coronavirus) pandemic but things could get worse with Prabowo," Abuza said.

"I think he would go into the ranks of retired military men for his advisors and cabinet officials. But the bigger concern is that he would accelerate the return of the military."

Voters in Jakarta told CNN that this year's result could also signal the return of "dynasty ***politics***." Yohanes Gregorius Tukan, 41, said Prabowo and Gibran's campaign showed "nuanced nepotism and corruption." Another voter, Kuncoro Rikoni, feared "a return to authoritarian rule."

"We do not want to lose the democracy that we have fought for with blood and tears in 1998."

CNN's Alex Stambaugh, Teele Rebane contributed to this report. and Journalist Agustinus Beo da Costa contributed reporting from Jakarta.

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