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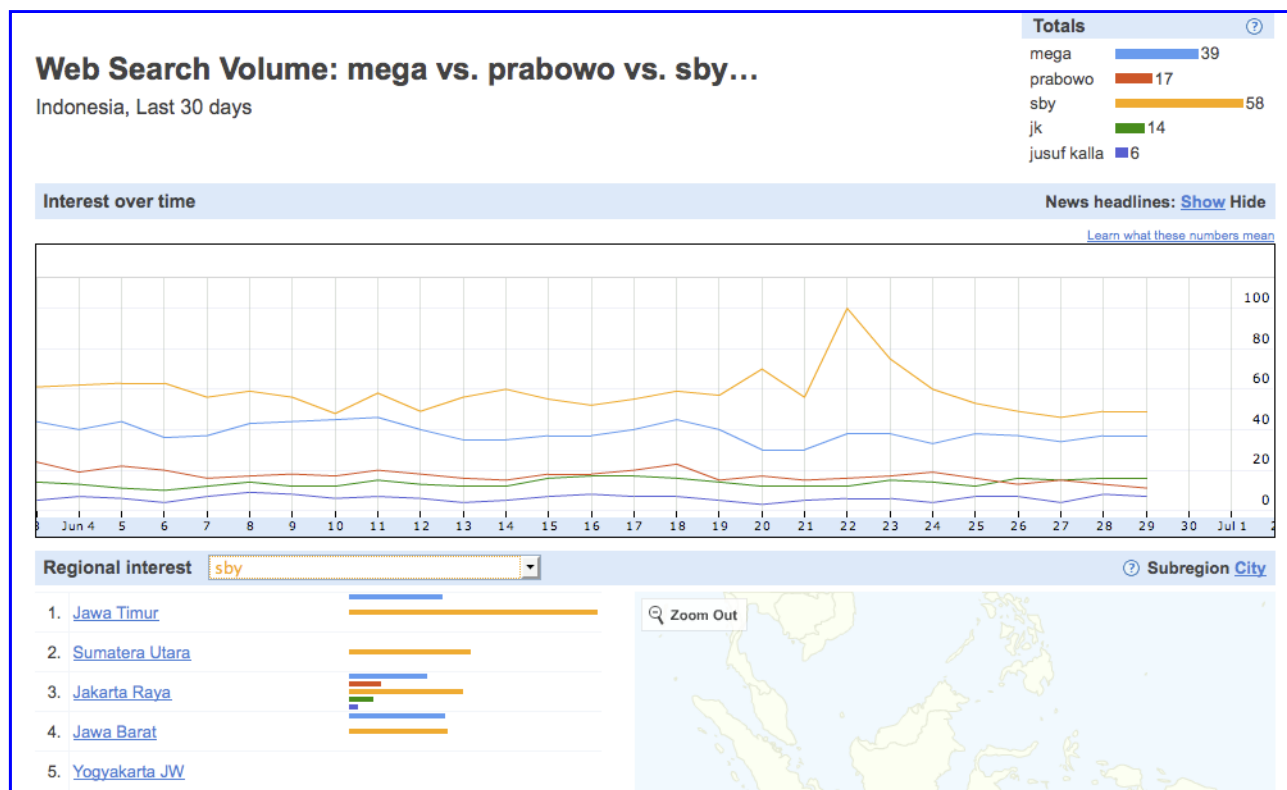
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Presidential Election in Indonesia

July 2nd, 2009 — Scott Hartley

The summer months of 2009 have already played host to game-changing elections in the world's largest Hindu and Shiite Muslim nations, India and Iran respectively. On July 8, Indonesia – the world's fourth-largest by-population nation, the world's largest Muslim country as well as largest Muslim democracy– will hold its presidential elections.

On July 8, Demokrat party incumbent Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will face off against the incumbent Vice President Jusuf Kalla, now the Golkar party presidential nominee, and against 2001-2004 Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, also daughter of Indonesia's first President Sukarno. Megawati is the leader of the opposition party known as Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, or PDI-P. Her controversial career soldier running mate, Prabowo Subianto, is the son-in-law of Suharto and the well-heeled founder and former Presidential nominee of the Gerindra party.



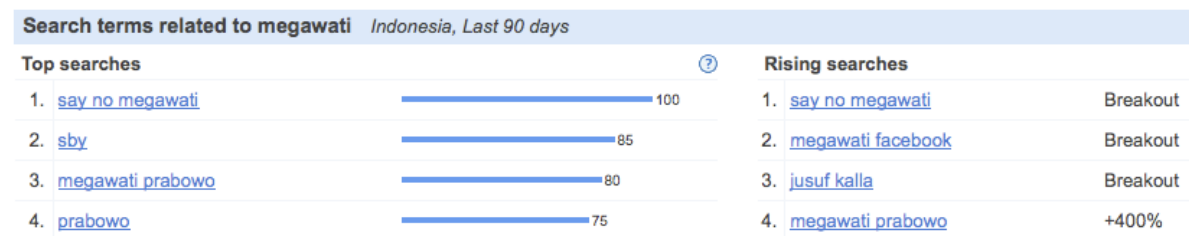
30-day domestic relative data on most popular candidate terms

While the perennial elite continues to vie for Indonesia’s top office, political engagement is moving from the streets to the information superhighway. Despite religious differences, the most salient non-domestic interest in the Iranian elections came from Jakarta, where –according to [Google Insights for Search](#)– Indonesian (Bahasa) trailed only Persian as the language of choice for entering Google search queries on Iranian presidential candidates. Outside of Iran and its diaspora, Indonesian interest in Iranian politics underscores religious trans-national solidarity, and an increasingly politically active youth demographic.

Within Indonesia, primary interest during the Iranian elections of early June stemmed from Internet users in the Javanese cities of Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya, and in the Sumatran capital of Medan. Prior to the July 8 Indonesian elections, increased online circumspection in these cities could impact domestic voting patterns. Though Internet penetration in Indonesia is low, limited to 13M –or 5.4 percent of its 240M people– its use is strong in young demographics, evidenced not least by the fact that seven of the 90-day Indonesian top-ten growth Google search terms relate to Facebook or Friendster.

Indonesia is an immensely diverse and complex country comprised of a rich history, and 922 inhabited islands, each multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious. Internet penetration is not ubiquitous, its use is not widespread across demographics, and Internet Service Providers are centralized predominately in hub cities.

Even accounting for such gaps, understanding the use of new online media such as search, social networks, and micro-blogging adds a necessary –if not sufficient– layer of analytical firepower for deciphering trends. One week before Indonesian presidential elections, search volume data yields interesting information. While incumbent Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono leads by 10 points according to a June 11 poll, aggregated search on iterations of his name –“sby,” “boediono,” “budiono,” “pd” (after his party)– show him leading by 6:1 over Megawati, and by even wider margins over former Vice Presidential incumbent Jusuf Kalla. Putative opinion in Indonesia is that “Mega” –as she is known– is out of the running. In certain regions such as Jawa Timur (East Java) “SBY” leads both in search and in political stronghold. Online “Mega” appears competitive until one realizes that predominate queries are, by “Breakout” proportions, “say no Megawati.”



Top Megawati search terms in Indonesia over last 90 days

But illustrative online activity must be conjoined with offline knowledge. Coupled with an understanding of demography, geography, language, religion, and domestic influence, the political application of this data can be at a minimum indicative of desultory intrigue, but potentially a leading indicator of alteration in public opinion. It must be understood in the context of its influence on domestic social and political institutions. Only if being informed translates to being influential, and only if political will moves from router box to ballot box, will those observations made online be indicative of likely political change. With the most recent polls indicating a spread in public opinion of no more than 10 points, should relative online search volume be correlated with votes cast, Presidential incumbent Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will be re-elected, and the Indonesia of next Wednesday won't look all that different from the Indonesia of today.



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3 Responses to “Presidential Election in Indonesia”

1. [Google Products » Blog Archive » Indonesia’s search for president](#) Says:
[July 29th, 2009 at 6:38 pm](#)

[...] this week Scott Hartley at the Berkman Center shared with me this great post he wrote about the presidential elections in Indonesia. In the post he notes that although only 5.4 [...]

2. [Aurelia Nugroho](#) Says:
[September 15th, 2009 at 11:00 pm](#)

Great post. Just one little correction, Indonesia is NOT a Muslim country, it's the country with the largest Muslim population. It does not have syari'a law as the foundation of their constitution.

3. [omid](#) Says:
[November 2nd, 2009 at 2:04 pm](#)

If it's the country with the largest Muslim population I Wonder that: Indonesia is NOT a Muslim country?!

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Theme: Garland by [Steven Wittens](#) and Stefan Nagtegaal.

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- [December 2008](#)
- [November 2008](#)
- [October 2008](#)
- [September 2008](#)
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- [July 2008](#)
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