



## FACT SHEET

# PUBLIC PERCEPTION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND TOLERANCE

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## BACKGROUND

In 2018, Search for Common Ground supported a public perception survey carried out by MARS Indonesia, a marketing research company, involving 711 survey respondents and 11 Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) across seven major Indonesian cities. The survey aimed to measure Indonesian citizens' perception and opinions on the state of Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) and interfaith tolerance, and how it is applied in their daily lives.

**711**

RESPONDENTS

**11**

KEY OPINION LEADERS

**7**

MAJOR CITIES



### Freedom of Religion, Belief and Tolerance in the Community

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In general, FoRB/tolerance was still highly valued by an overwhelming majority of respondents, with over 95% of responses in favour of FoRB/tolerance in a theoretical context. However, this support began to drop when respondents were asked about more practical element, with an average of between 10-40% (20-30% standard) of respondents – depending on location – whose practical implementation of tolerance somewhat contradicts their theoretical perceptions. In general, examples of such practical implementation provided in the survey could be considered as ‘minimum standard’ tolerance, requiring little sacrifice, and with almost no impact on the lives of others. This sub-group can be classified as ‘vulnerable to intolerance’.

- ✎ Agreement and awareness of the public regarding the theory or meaning of FoRB and tolerance remains considerably high (95-100% across a range of survey questions), as does understanding and agreement with the Pancasila ideology.
- ✎ Religious background was also a decisive factor. A range of factors may influence such responses, however the existence of ‘majoritarianism’ (or tyranny of majority) was present throughout both quantitative and qualitative findings.
- ✎ There was a significant drop-off in agreement when this FoRB/tolerance was required to be applied through simple actions in daily life. While figures depended upon action required as well as location, there were between 20-30% of respondents who were unwilling to engage in tolerant practices – regardless of their theoretical agreement.
- ✎ Religious exclusivity also appeared as an underlying factor within the decline in practical FoRB/tolerance application, with a lack of inter-religious engagement often appearing in responses. This finding was also strengthened by the context of Kupang, whose high levels of practical FoRB/tolerance application were supported by high levels of active inter-religious engagement – through community, governance and organizational activities.
- ✎ The inclusion of Kupang in the survey – as a city with different minority/majority demographics compared to other locations – skewed figures significantly, due to its high FoRB/tolerance levels (both theory and practice). Overall FoRB/tolerance figures dropped when Kupang’s data was removed, which highlights particular interest due to the city’s religious majority/minority demographics.
- ✎ Overall, there still remains a large percentage of the community who support FoRB – both theoretically and practically. However, the 20-30% of ‘vulnerable to intolerance’ is a figure large enough – if not engaged in positive FoRB/tolerance application – to shift the underlying harmony and diversity upon which Indonesia was established.
- ✎ Bandung displayed the lowest FoRB/tolerance ratings across almost all areas surveyed, particularly in FoRB/tolerance practical application. The city’s higher levels of engagement in religious organizations, as well as higher levels of social media engagement highlight potential influencing factors in Bandung’s figures.

### Freedom of Religion, Belief and Tolerance and the Role of the State

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In general, respondents believe that the government (and its relevant institutions) have a strong and specific role to play in the protection and promotion of FoRB/tolerance in Indonesia. However, figures displayed a significant shift between the underlying beliefs of respondents compared to actual application of FoRB/tolerance, in this case regarding the government’s role.

- ✎ There were high rates of agreeance on the importance of the government’s role in protecting and acting on religious freedom, however these beliefs were not completely reflected in perceptions on application of such a role.
- ✎ Across the board only 24% of respondents believed that the majority is favored by government regulations, with 47% believing this is not the case. Furthermore, Kupang respondents registered only a 4% agreeance rate, which if inverted (due to Kupang’s majority being a national minority), found that almost all respondents believed, or were neither in agreement or disagreement, that regulations are in favor of the majority religion in Indonesia. Such perceptions highlight a significant contrast between religious followers, with both parties believing that the other is in a better position under government regulations.
- ✎ There was varying agreement regarding the government’s perceived and expected role, the concept of protecting the rights of all versus the perceived rights (or wishes) of the majority, and perhaps the core understanding (aside from conceptual) of what such rights and roles mean in ‘reality’.
- ✎ Overall, respondents from the majority religion were in higher agreeance that their religious actions (gaining approval for activities, establishing places of worship) were supported by the State than agreement rates of minority religious groups.



## Religious Organizations and Freedom of Religion, Beliefs and Tolerance

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While over 70% of respondents believed religious groups are useful, more than half do not participate in such organizations. Overall, respondents portrayed that they don't mind religious organizations and their actions, as long as the actions are peaceful and don't cause issues in the community.

- ✦ Respondents were most aware of the major Islamic organizations across the country, however, a number of hardline groups figured prominently in the Top of Mind answers. This is perhaps due to the coverage such groups receive in the media, as well as the nature of their actions.
- ✦ Awareness of religious groups was most often gathered from a respondent's family or friends, with media also a key source of awareness.
- ✦ Only 69% disagreed with religious groups upholding the law/morals within the community, which mirrors increasing occurrences of 'moral policing' across the country.
- ✦ Kupang showed higher awareness of student groups (of both Christian and Islamic backgrounds) that of traditional organizations, that points to the potential role of such groups engaging in promoting harmony and tolerance within the city.
- ✦ There were relatively high numbers of respondents who agreed (18% agreed and 28% neither agreed nor disagreed) that there was little use for religious organizations, and that they should just be abolished, which perhaps points to an overall reaction to the role, impact and coverage of some groups across Indonesian society in recent times.

## Media, Freedom of Religion, Belief and Tolerance

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Media plays a significant role in the distribution, and sometimes development, of FoRB/tolerance issues across the country. Indonesia remains one of the highest users of digital media across the world, and the public's engagement only increases as the nation continues to develop. Fake news has increased considerably, often acting as a method for specific groups and even politicians to spread their message and bring down their opposition.

- ✦ Television remains the primary source of news (97% of respondents), with social/online media also rating highly with 87% utilization.
- ✦ 64% of respondents used social media for between one to four hours per day, and 27% between 5 to 8 hours, which in itself shows a significant amount of log-in time per day.
- ✦ While Facebook remains by far the most utilized platform (91%), Bandung displayed significantly high rates of Twitter use in comparison to other cities. Alongside this, Bandung portrayed much higher time online, which may perhaps support the link between social media and rising intolerance.
- ✦ Most respondents said they tend to avoid engaging with and spreading negative religious content, however of interest was the lower agreement rate from Jakarta that negative social media use can result in negative impact for the community.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Engaging the ‘vulnerable to intolerance’ demographic

– Identifying, understanding and engaging the demographic who displayed decreased willingness to apply tolerance – regardless of their agreeance with the theory. This forms the group that may determine FoRB/ tolerance in the future of Indonesia.

### 2. Challenge Intolerant Voices

– Through inclusive and appealing modes that further distance the small but loud intolerant voices from the majority of society.

### 3. Religious Leaders as Information Sources

– To support the spreading of truth and positive/tolerant messaging in a climate of increased social media use and false news.

### 4. Promoting Positive Stories

– To evidence the ‘real’ Indonesia and the application of FoRB/ tolerance through methods that engage and invite the audience to participate.

### 5. Comprehension of Majority Status

– Within this, comprehension of human rights in theory as well as practice, and the majority’s role in supporting its application.



## CONCLUSION

Overall, the research highlighted a significant gap between theoretical ideas of FoRB/tolerance and its practical application across the respondent range. This gap – displayed both within perceptions of FoRB/ tolerance in the community as well as by government institutions – portrayed a contradiction for 20-30% of respondents in applying their theoretical agreement regarding FoRB/tolerance in everyday life. In reality, this means there are 20-30% of respondents who don’t ‘practice what they preach’, which forms a worrying sign for the long-term stability of Indonesia’s diverse and multi-religious society.





## ABOUT SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Search for Common Ground is an international humanitarian organization, established in 1982 with a focus on peacebuilding, transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions with an emphasis on problem solving. Our mission is to build sustainable peace for future generations by working with all parties from conflict, providing the tools needed to work together and find constructive solutions.

Search works in 36 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America. In Indonesia, Search works with local partners and organizations, supports the process of building a culture of peace through media, dialogue, strengthening community relations and capacity building since 2002.

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