

# Foreword



In the first report of 'Older People and COVID-19 in Indonesia', I wrote that human beings have overcome countless infectious diseases with wisdom, solidarity, and resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, is still having a major impact all over the world even though more than 2 years have passed since the outbreak. In their efforts to overcome the pandemic, many countries are still combating the mutation of the virus through a wide range of measures, such as expanding vaccination coverage. Indonesia is one of the ASEAN Member States most affected by COVID-19 in terms of the numbers of confirmed cases and fatalities. ERIA research reported that COVID-19 in Indonesia infected more than 6.0 million people and caused over 150,000 deaths (as of 30 June 2022). Of all age groups, older people are most affected by COVID-19 in terms of serious symptoms and mortality.

The worst health impacts since World War II the Indonesian economy has experienced has given rise to a recession. Indonesia reported three consecutive quarters of negative growth, of 1.74%, 2.41%, and 4.19%, quarter-on-quarter, respectively, from the fourth quarter of 2019 until the second quarter of 2020 (CEIC, 2021). Meanwhile, the Indonesian the government has been engaged in trying to improve economic growth with a view to achieving an upturn. The latest CEIC reports show that Indonesia's GDP expanded by 5.01%, year-on-year, in March 2022. Moreover, Indonesia's total exports in April 2022 reportedly reached an all-time high of about US\$27.3 billion, an estimated increase of over 45% compared with the previous year. These successes are the fruits of the government's effort and its effective economic policies.

But we must also consider the situation from a micro perspective. The COVID-19 has affected vulnerable people, such as the elderly, in particular. The Indonesian Government did not overlook the impact on those people and collaborated with us to clarify their challenges. Our first survey showed that the impact of COVID-19 on older people is not limited to the direct effects of the disease, but that it also includes the effect on their social and economic situation. The second survey of 'Older People and COVID-19 in Indonesia' was conducted in November 2020 to visualise the impact on the lives of older people. I am pleased to be able to publish this report as it shows that we are now gradually emerging from the worst of the pandemic.

I believe that this series of research has great academic and practical significance in that it shows the situation in the early stages of the pandemic, which will guide future policy to deal with possible public health emergencies.

The follow-up survey revealed changes in the condition of older people about 5 months after the first survey, which was conducted in July 2020. Over the course of 5 months, the COVID-19 situation in Indonesia had improved, and social activities gradually resumed accordingly. The survey, however, revealed that the situation of aged people had not necessarily improved. Around 40% of respondents saw their incomes decline, and 25% of them did nothing to overcome declining income problems. Although these tendencies had improved compared to the first round, cash assistance was still preferred to and had more beneficiaries than non-cash assistance. Moreover, the respondents who reported that their physical health had deteriorated increased compared to those in July 2020. In November 2020, about 21.41% of respondents said their health had deteriorated, compared with only 15.52% in July 2020. These two surveys revealed the necessity of easy and safe access to health facilities during a pandemic. Furthermore, some respondents still had difficulties gaining access to health facilities and medicine due to their economic situation. Meanwhile, mental health conditions over the same period – more older people chose in-person meetings to maintain social connectedness than before.

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, it is necessary to understand what the actual impacts are. The first-round study provides valuable information about the impact of COVID-19 on older people in terms of their economic situation, health, and social interaction. Many older people saw a decline in their income and a deterioration in their physical and mental health, and changed their social interaction patterns. On the basis of various kinds of information including this survey, the government of Indonesia has tried to strike a balance between the economy and health during these 2 years. The policies concerning older people were also changed several times based on the infection situation. In this context, this follow-up survey was needed to provide an update on the COVID-19 impact on the condition of older people during the pandemic.

This survey was proposed by the Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS). Considering the urgent need for and critical importance of such a survey, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) was honoured to collaborate with BAPPENAS on it, and we are pleased that our surveys contributed to supporting their economic and healthcare strategy. As Dr Pungky Sumad, Deputy for Population and Manpower, mentioned, the Indonesian government will continue to work to 'improve older people's livelihoods, including their health, economic conditions, and access to social protection during emergencies' for a better future society.

Beginning with this series of research, ERIA commits itself to assisting Indonesian policy making in the healthcare fields for the future as well.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to our older respondents, who generously agreed to participate in this survey. We also appreciate the family members of older people for their kind support in making the phone survey a success. In the phone survey interviews, they were a big help for our team as they explained the survey's objectives and connect us with older people respondents in their families. As some of the selected respondents were incapable of responding to the interview questions because of their impaired cognitive function or for other reasons, their family members were requested to answer the questions as proxies.

Our sincere gratitude goes to BAPPENAS for the firm leadership of our colleagues and to SurveyMETER for its dedicated work. Conducting a survey during the pandemic was difficult employing usual methods as face-to-face meetings had to be avoided as much as possible. But this phone survey became a good example of a feasible method to be used during a pandemic.

Using the data from the second-round survey and comparing it with the first survey gives us a more insightful analysis enabling us to understand the change of older people over time and inputs to the adaptive policies. As the President of ERIA, based in Jakarta, I am extremely happy to continue the collaboration with Indonesia and I sincerely hope that the outcome of such cooperation will inform the government's policymaking to benefit the Indonesian people.



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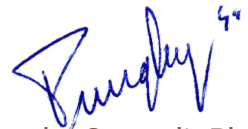
Indonesia's population is ageing at a rapid pace. According to the *Badan Pusat Statistik* (Statistics Indonesia), the number of Indonesia's older people (aged 60 and above) reached 29.3 million in 2021, representing a growth of 3.2% over a decade. Now is a strategic time, therefore, for Indonesia to give more attention to and create a more robust policy for the older population. BAPPENAS has started the initiative by developing a pilot of Older People Information and Service System or SILANI, covering about 15,000 older people in three provinces, including the Capital Region of Jakarta, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and Bali. The last two regions have shown the most rapid growth of older people compared to other Indonesian provinces.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a more vital urgency for the Indonesian government to move forward with better ageing policies. Older people have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, calling for action. ERIA came to support BAPPENAS, as the national development planning institution, to better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has made the older population more vulnerable. The SILANI pilot has provided a unique opportunity to develop a two-waves phone survey to help understand the impact of the pandemic on older people.

The first survey wave was conducted in July 2020 and showed that older Indonesian people suffered the multidimensional impacts of income, physical health, and mental health deterioration due to the pandemic. The second round conducted in the next 2 months clarified that there had been some further negative impacts. However, the survey also found a slight improvement associated with the relaxation of the physical distancing and lockdown enforcement. This finding implies that the pandemic created anxiety due to its health impacts on older people, and the enforcement of physical distancing significantly affected their well-being. These findings will be significant to support policymaking on ageing issues.

This study is in line with several government initiatives. The President of the Republic of Indonesia recently signed the Presidential Regulation of 88/2021 concerning the National Strategy of Aging. The President has also declared the goal of reaching 0% extreme poverty by 2024. Both initiatives mandate the government to improve older people's livelihoods, including their health, economic conditions, and access to social protection during emergencies.

Finally, we would like to thank ERIA for supporting the study and SurveyMETER for executing the survey. The report has been helpful for us, and we genuinely hope that this research product will be equally valuable and inspirational for other parties, especially in formulating affirmative action policies for older people. We are open to input and suggestions for improving this study. Thank you very much.



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