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MISSING FROM THE TABLE: WHICH INDONESIAN PROVINCES ARE ABSENT FROM EDUCATION STATISTICS

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ABSTRACT

Four Indonesian provinces are absent from the national education completion table and five from the community literacy index, and the absences are not random. Using four Central Statistics Agency tables covering 2023 and 2025, this article shows that the provinces missing from the completion table score 11.05, 15.10, 17.58 and 7.60 percentage points below those present on the four published school participation age bands, so the tables that report attainment omit precisely the jurisdictions where attainment is lowest. The consequence is quantifiable. Removing Papua alone — the lowest-scoring province still present — from the completion table reduces the coefficient of variation across provinces by 50.2 per cent at primary level, 30.8 per cent at lower secondary and 9.7 per cent at upper secondary, and four provinces with comparable or lower participation are already absent. Every published dispersion measure for Indonesian educational attainment is therefore a lower bound by an unknown but substantial amount. A second kind of absence has the opposite character: Bali is missing from the literacy index while ranking second of thirty-eight on participation at ages sixteen to eighteen and fourth of thirty-four on upper secondary completion. The article argues that the two kinds of absence require different treatment and that neither should be handled by silent deletion.

1. INTRODUCTION

A statistical table with thirty-four rows where thirty-eight provinces exist tells the reader something before any figure in it is read. Which four are missing, and whether their absence is related to what the table measures, determines what every statistic computed from it means.

The Indonesian education tables published by the Central Statistics Agency differ in coverage. School participation by age band covers all thirty-eight provinces. Village school facilities cover all thirty-eight. Education completion by level covers thirty-four. The community literacy development index covers thirty-three.

This article asks whether the missing provinces differ systematically from the present ones. For the completion table the answer is that they do, and by a wide margin: on the participation table, where all thirty-eight appear, the four absent from the completion table average 88.17 per cent at ages seven to twelve against 99.22 for the thirty-four present, and 61.02 per cent at ages sixteen to eighteen against 78.60.

The effect on published statistics can be bounded. Removing Papua alone — the lowest-scoring province that does appear in the completion table — reduces the coefficient of variation across

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provinces by 50.2 per cent at primary level. Four more provinces of comparable or lower participation are already absent, so the reported dispersion is a lower bound by an amount that is certainly large.

The research gap is that Indonesian education statistics are used without their coverage being characterised, so the systematic direction of the missingness is not part of the reading. This article characterises it for four tables and quantifies what it costs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Coverage as a property of a statistic

A first strand concerns what a published table can be asked to support given what it omits.

Fazlul, Koedel and Parsons (2023) show that a widely used administrative educational proxy does not measure the concept it names, and trace the consequences for policy built on it. The missingness examined here is a related but distinct failure: the measure may be sound and the population it covers may not be the one the reader assumes.

Viano, Baker, Ford and Johnston-Guerrero (2024) apply latent class analysis to racial terminology across a literature and find the categories inconsistent; Ford, Iantosca and Cate (2025) document the variability of the self-identification underlying them. In both, who is counted in which category determines what the resulting statistics mean.

Gates, Teasdale, Shim and Hubacz (2024) argue for explicit specification of evaluative criteria, and the coverage of a table is among the things that ought to be specified. Engel and Burch (2021) note that comparative policy work depends on indicators that travel, which gives a table with incomplete coverage an authority its coverage does not warrant.

2.2 The populations most often absent

A second strand concerns who tends to be missing from official data and why it matters.

Barber (2025) studies how refugee children with disabilities access learning, and Prentice (2022) practices with refugee pupils in two English schools; both concern populations that administrative systems enumerate poorly. Gaurav, Aldersey, Lewis and Batorowicz (2023) examine school design for physical disability, another domain where the affected population is under-recorded.

Jover, Manzano, Llos and Termes (2025) study families in a segregation-reduction programme, and Serrano-Ardila, Baena-Navarro and Carriazo-Regino (2026) rural education specifically. Luschei and colleagues (2026) compare student well-being across three countries and treat the differences as the subject rather than as noise.

The common thread is that the units least well served are the ones hardest to measure, so that missingness and disadvantage are correlated by construction. This is the mechanism Section 4.2 documents at the level of a province.

2.3 New administrative units

A third strand concerns the specific cause operating here.

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Indonesia created four provinces in 2022, dividing the former province of Papua. A newly created jurisdiction has no statistical history, its sampling frame must be rebuilt, and household surveys designed for the previous boundaries do not yield estimates for the new ones without redesign. That the four absent provinces are exactly the four created in 2022 is therefore explicable.

The explicability does not remove the consequence. Kelchen, Ortagus, Rosinger, Baker and Lingo (2023) relate funding strategies to outcomes across administrative units, a design that requires the units to be present in both series; Armand, Herman and Honore (2024) decompose inequality of opportunity, which requires the full population.

Bokhove, Jerrim and Sims (2024) test an official measure against a source of bias, and the exercise is only possible where the measure covers the units of interest. Coverage is a precondition for validation, not a detail of it.

2.4 Handling incompleteness

A fourth strand concerns what to do about it.

The options are to impute, to exclude and report the exclusion, or to exclude silently. The third is the most common and the least defensible. Imputation requires a model of the missingness, and where the missingness is systematically related to the outcome — as Section 4.2 shows it is here — a model that assumes otherwise will understate dispersion further.

Min and Aryadoust (2021) and Stals, Isac and Claes (2024) both address measurement comparability, which is the prior question: units must be measured comparably before their absence can be treated as a missing value rather than as a different quantity. Goldhaber, Grout, Wolff and Martinkova (2021) assess reliability directly.

This article takes the second option throughout. It reports the exclusions, characterises them, and bounds their effect, without imputing any value.

2.5 What incomplete coverage prevents

A fifth strand records the kinds of question that an incomplete provincial series cannot answer, which is the practical cost of the gap.

Wagner, Nair, Thapa and Kumar (2025) construct a Gini-based learning inequality index intended to be comparable across contexts; a Gini computed on a truncated population that omits its lower tail is not comparable to one computed on a complete population. Adeleke and McSharry (2022) predict a composite education index from a small set of indicators, an exercise that requires every unit to carry every indicator.

Dearing, Zachrisson, Bustamante and Vandell (2026) study the developmental timing of educational opportunity, and Sanfo and Malgoubri (2023) whether instructional quality narrows socioeconomic gaps; both are questions about the units furthest from the mean, which are the units most likely to be absent. Ollikainen, Pekkarinen, Uusitalo and Virtanen (2024) estimate returns to secondary education, and Edmark (2025) the effect of local supply on field of study — designs that

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need supply and outcome for the same unit, which the Indonesian tables do not provide for four provinces.

Two measurement studies mark the boundary of what can be recovered. Coates (2026) fits a diagnostic classification model to an international assessment, and O'Neill, Lauridsen, Ostengaard and Qvortrup (2023) review the validity evidence for an instrument in wide use; both proceed from a covered population to a latent structure, and neither procedure survives the systematic absence of a tail. Ahmed (2023) argues that the field has persistently asked the wrong questions of a perennial crisis, and asking a question of a population that excludes its worst cases is one way to do so.

2.6 Who else goes uncounted

A sixth strand records that the problem is not confined to jurisdictions, and that similar gaps run through the populations educational research studies.

Edwards and Kraft (2025) show that a single policy label covers programmes differing so widely that aggregate evaluation of them is close to meaningless, which is the categorical analogue of a coverage gap: the units are present in the data and are not comparable. Roch, Baxter and Yang (2026) examine the role of counsellors in advanced course enrolment, a determinant that administrative records rarely capture.

Murphy and Reid (2025) track depression among early childhood educators before and during a period of disruption, a workforce that education statistics generally omit. George and Thornby (2023) study the motivations of preservice teachers in England, and Li, Chen, Chen, Li and Xu (2026) elicit quality from the perspective of children themselves — two populations whose views enter no administrative series.

Granato, Havari, Mazzarella and Schnepf (2024) evaluate a mobility programme whose participants are by construction outside the ordinary enrolment records of either country. Ayllon (2022) documents gender bias in online teaching, and Soesmanto, Vu and Kariyawasam (2023) evaluate a mixed-mode design; in both, the mode of delivery determines what an attendance record even means.

The common feature is that a statistical system records what it was built to record, and that the gaps are systematic rather than random. The provincial case examined in this article is unusual only in that the gap is visible on the face of the table.

2.7 The research gap

The coverage of Indonesian provincial education tables has not been characterised, nor has the direction or magnitude of the resulting bias been estimated. This article does both for four tables.

3. METHOD

Four Central Statistics Agency tables are used, all retrieved on 30 August 2026: Angka Partisipasi Sekolah (APS) Menurut Provinsi dan Kelompok Umur for 2025; Jumlah Desa yang Memiliki Fasilitas Sekolah Menurut Provinsi dan Tingkat Pendidikan for 2025; Tingkat Penyelesaian Pendidikan Menurut

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Jenjang Pendidikan dan Provinsi for 2023; and Indeks Pembangunan Literasi Masyarakat dan Dimensi Penyusunnya Menurut Provinsi for 2025.

For each table the number of provinces with data is recorded and the missing provinces are named. A province is treated as missing where every column of the table is empty for it; no table in this set has partial coverage of a province across its columns.

The systematic character of the missingness is assessed by comparing the missing provinces to the present ones on a table where all thirty-eight appear. The participation table serves this purpose because it is complete and because participation is conceptually close to the outcomes measured in the incomplete tables.

The magnitude of the resulting bias is bounded by a leave-one-out exercise on the incomplete table itself: the dispersion measures are recomputed omitting the lowest-scoring province present, and the change is reported. This gives the effect of one province of that character; the tables are missing four.

Four limitations apply. First, the bound obtained is indicative rather than exact, since the absent provinces are not identical to the one omitted in the exercise. Second, no value is imputed and no estimate of what the complete figures would be is offered. Third, one year is observed for each table. Fourth, the analysis describes the coverage of these four tables and does not generalise to Indonesian official statistics as a whole.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Coverage of the four tables

Table 1 sets out which provinces each table covers.

Table 1. Provincial coverage of four Indonesian education tables

Table	Year	Provinces	Missing
School participation by age	2025	38 of 38	none
Village school facilities	2025	38 of 38	none
Education completion by level	2023	34 of 38	the four provinces created in 2022
Community literacy index	2025	33 of 38	those four, and Bali

Compiled by the authors from the four Central Statistics Agency tables named in Section 3, all retrieved 30 August 2026. The four provinces created in 2022 are Papua Selatan, Papua Tengah, Papua Pegunungan and Papua Barat Daya.

The two complete tables are those built from administrative counts or from a survey with a design that survived the boundary change. The two incomplete ones are an attainment measure and a composite index.

The four provinces absent from both incomplete tables are the same four, and they are exactly the four created in 2022 from the former province of Papua. The explanation is administrative and unremarkable in itself.

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Bali is the exception and it is a different case entirely. It appears in the completion table and is missing only from the literacy index. Section 4.4 takes it up.

4.2 The missing provinces are not typical

Table 2 compares the four provinces absent from the completion table to the thirty-four present, using the participation table where all thirty-eight appear.

Table 2. School participation of the provinces absent from and present in the completion table, 2025

Age band	34 present	4 absent	Difference	Lowest of the four
7–12	99.22%	88.17%	11.05 pts	Papua Tengah 80.13%
13–15	96.25%	81.15%	15.10 pts	Papua Tengah 67.86%
16–18	78.60%	61.02%	17.58 pts	Papua Tengah 44.61%
19–23	30.28%	22.68%	7.60 pts	Papua Pegunungan 12.4

Computed by the authors from the Central Statistics Agency participation and completion tables named in Section 3. Group figures are unweighted means across the provinces in each group. The four absent provinces are Papua Selatan, Papua Tengah, Papua Pegunungan and Papua Barat Daya.

The four absent provinces are below the thirty-four present on every age band, by margins of 11.05, 15.10, 17.58 and 7.60 percentage points. The gap is widest at ages sixteen to eighteen, which is the band corresponding to the upper secondary level where completion dispersion is greatest.

The missingness is therefore not random with respect to the outcome. The completion table omits four of the provinces where completion would almost certainly be lowest, and it does so systematically rather than by chance.

One of the four is not extreme. Papua Barat Daya records 98.67 per cent at ages seven to twelve and 81.70 at sixteen to eighteen, the latter above the mean of the thirty-four present. The group difference is driven by the other three, and Papua Barat Daya is included in the group means as reported.

4.3 How much dispersion is lost

Table 3 bounds the effect by removing the lowest present province from the completion table and recomputing.

Table 3. Dispersion of completion rates with and without Papua, the lowest present province

Level	CV, 34	CV, 33	Fall	Gini, 34
Primary	0.0345	0.0172	50.2%	0.0137
Lower secondary	0.0600	0.0415	30.8%	0.0294
Upper secondary	0.1600	0.1445	9.7%	0.0861

Computed by the authors from the Central Statistics Agency completion table named in Section 3. The 33-province column omits Papua, which records the lowest completion rate at all three levels. The fall is the proportional reduction in the coefficient of variation.

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The removal of a single province halves the measured dispersion of primary completion, from a coefficient of variation of 0.0345 to 0.0172. At lower secondary the reduction is 30.8 per cent and at upper secondary 9.7 per cent.

The exercise runs in the opposite direction from the one that matters, but it is the only one the data permit, and it establishes the order of magnitude. If one province of Papua's character can account for half the measured dispersion at primary level, then four provinces of comparable or worse character, currently absent, would raise it by an amount of the same order.

The reduction falls as the level rises, which is a consequence of the primary rate operating near its ceiling: with thirty-three of thirty-four provinces between 92.69 and 99.09 per cent, a single observation at 80.09 dominates the variance. At upper secondary the distribution is wide enough that no single province dominates.

The practical statement is that every published dispersion measure for Indonesian educational attainment is a lower bound, that the understatement is largest at the levels closest to universality, and that it cannot be quantified without the missing data.

4.4 The second kind of absence

Bali is missing from the literacy index and from nothing else, and its case is the opposite of the Papua one.

On the tables where it appears Bali is well served. It records 90.68 per cent participation at ages sixteen to eighteen, the second highest of thirty-eight provinces; 34.32 per cent at ages nineteen to twenty-three, eighth of thirty-eight; and 76.51 per cent upper secondary completion, fourth of thirty-four. It has 43 villages with a higher education institution against 713 with a primary school.

Its absence from the literacy index therefore cannot be attributed to the difficulty of measuring a poorly served jurisdiction. Whatever the cause — a collection failure, a reporting delay, a definitional issue with the institutions the index counts — it is not the cause operating for the four Papua provinces.

The distinction matters for how the two should be handled. Where missingness is related to the outcome, exclusion biases every statistic in a known direction and the appropriate treatment is to say so, as Section 4.3 does. Where missingness is unrelated to the outcome, exclusion costs precision and not accuracy, and the appropriate treatment is to note it and proceed.

A table that reports thirty-three rows without distinguishing the two kinds invites the reader to treat them alike, and the treatment appropriate to one is wrong for the other.

4.5 What the complete tables show about the incomplete ones

The two complete tables are useful precisely because they cover the provinces the others omit, and they permit a partial view of what is missing.

On the supply table, three of the four absent provinces have among the scarcest secondary provision in the country: Papua Selatan has 14.32 villages with a primary school for every one with an upper secondary school, the highest ratio of the thirty-eight; Papua Pegunungan has 10.41 and Papua Tengah 8.96, against a national figure of 3.92.

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On the participation table the same three record 66.97, 50.79 and 44.61 per cent at ages sixteen to eighteen. Both series point the same way and neither is available in the completion table.

This does not license imputation. What it licenses is a statement of direction: the four absent provinces are, on every measure available for them, at or near the bottom of the national distribution, and their inclusion would move the completion figures down and the dispersion figures up.

Papua Barat Daya is again the qualified case, with a supply ratio of 5.57 and participation of 81.70 per cent at ages sixteen to eighteen, both near the middle of the distribution. Three of the four are extreme and one is not.

4.6 Why the two complete tables are complete

That two of the four tables cover all thirty-eight provinces while two do not is itself informative, and the difference lies in how each is produced.

The village facility table is an administrative census. Every village in Indonesia is enumerated and the presence of a school is recorded by the local authority; when a province is created, its villages are simply reassigned to the new code and the count is available immediately. No statistical estimation is involved and no sample design has to be rebuilt.

The participation table is survey-based but is derived from the national socioeconomic survey, whose sample is large enough and whose stratification is granular enough that provincial estimates could be produced for the new units within a cycle. That it covers all thirty-eight is a design achievement rather than an accident.

The completion table is also survey-based but measures a stock over an older population, which requires a larger effective sample for a given precision because the relevant cohort is a smaller share of the household population. The literacy index is a composite drawing on institutional records that are organised by the previous administrative boundaries. Both are harder to rebuild for a new province than a participation rate is.

The lesson generalises. Where a boundary change occurs, administrative series recover first, large-sample survey series next, and composites drawing on institutional records last. A user encountering a gap in a provincial table can usually infer its cause from the production method, and the inference bears directly on whether the gap will close.

4.7 Implications for practice

Four implications follow.

First, coverage should be stated wherever a provincial figure is reported. A dispersion measure computed on thirty-four of thirty-eight provinces is a different quantity from one computed on all thirty-eight, and the difference is not small: a single province accounts for half the measured dispersion of primary completion.

Second, the direction of the bias should be stated too. It is knowable here without imputation, because the absent provinces appear in two other tables and are at the bottom of both.

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Third, the two kinds of absence should be distinguished. Bali missing from the literacy index and Papua Tengah missing from the completion table are not the same event and do not warrant the same footnote.

Fourth, and beyond the scope of an analyst, the case for extending the completion and literacy series to the four provinces created in 2022 is strong. They are, on the evidence of the series that do cover them, the jurisdictions where the measured outcomes would be most informative, and they have now been absent from attainment statistics for the entire period since their creation.

4.8 Limitations of the finding

Four limitations bound the result.

The bound in Section 4.3 is indicative. Papua is not identical to the four absent provinces and the exercise removes one province where four are missing, so the reported reductions cannot be read as an estimate of what inclusion would produce. They establish an order of magnitude and nothing finer.

The comparison in Section 4.2 uses participation as a proxy for completion. The two are related but distinct outcomes, and a companion analysis finds their provincial rankings to diverge substantially. A province low on participation is likely but not certain to be low on completion.

The article treats a blank cell as an absence of data. Where the underlying cause is a suppression rule — for instance, a minimum sample size below which the Agency does not publish — the missingness is a deliberate quality control rather than a gap, and its interpretation changes. The published tables do not state which applies.

Finally, four tables in one country in one period is a narrow base. The mechanism identified, that newly created jurisdictions drop out of survey-based series while remaining in administrative ones, is general and would be worth examining wherever administrative boundaries have recently changed.

5. CONCLUSION

Two of four Indonesian provincial education tables are complete and two are not. The completion table covers thirty-four of thirty-eight provinces and the literacy index thirty-three.

The four provinces absent from both are the four created in 2022, and they are not typical. On the participation table, where all thirty-eight appear, they score 11.05, 15.10, 17.58 and 7.60 percentage points below the thirty-four present on the four age bands. Three of the four also have among the scarcest upper secondary provision in the country, with Papua Selatan at 14.32 primary-school villages per upper-secondary-school village against a national 3.92.

The cost is quantifiable in order of magnitude. Removing Papua alone from the completion table — the lowest province still present — cuts the coefficient of variation by 50.2 per cent at primary level, 30.8 per cent at lower secondary and 9.7 per cent at upper secondary. Four provinces of comparable character are already absent.

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A second kind of absence has the opposite character. Bali is missing from the literacy index while ranking second of thirty-eight on participation at ages sixteen to eighteen and fourth of thirty-four on upper secondary completion; its absence costs precision rather than accuracy.

The recommendation is that coverage and the direction of its bias be stated wherever a provincial figure is published, that the two kinds of absence be distinguished rather than footnoted alike, and that no value be imputed for provinces whose absence is systematically related to what is being measured.

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