

Unravelling the Malaysian Dewan Rakyat

ANALYSING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES 2018-2019 USING DATA SCIENCE

JULY 2018 – NOVEMBER 2019



BASIC ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

- Methodology: Keyword-based analysis
 - The list of keywords was built based on a rough analysis of the words that are recorded in the Hansard
 - The context of a spoken keyword may be lost. For example, the word “stupid” may be recorded under the Speaker’s name but the context of that work is to reprimand an MP and not directed to an MP.
- Data source: Hansard of Dewan Rakyat from July 2018 to November 2019. Term 1 and Term 2, 14th Parliament Session
 - After the 14th General Election until the Sheraton Move
- Hansard Analysis was performed on two levels:
 - Entire Hansard – Evaluating the keywords spoken by MPs
 - Verbal questions and answers – Evaluating the topics of questions posed by MPs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1/2)

1. PARLIAMENT IS FREQUENTLY USED AS AN ARENA FOR POLITICAL GRANDSTANDING

- The debate opportunities are misused as a way to fish for votes using populist topics especially those on basic infrastructures such as schools, hospitals and roads
- At the same time, important but less populist topics related to public policies such as environment, and industrial revolution are not prioritised by MPs

2. DEBATE TOPICS IN PARLIAMENT ARE FREQUENTLY DRIVEN BY OPPOSITION MPs

- Opposition MPs have more freedom to bring forward debate topics based on their own agenda. Most issues and topics debated in the Parliament are championed by Opposition MPs
- Government MPs (i.e. the Executives), due to their portfolio as Ministers and Deputy Ministers, do not have much room to bring in new topics and issues. Their roles are reduced to just answering questions raised by other MPs
- Thus, the opposition bloc actually plays a major role in order to bring up certain agenda and debate topics in the Parliament. Civil society and NGOs need to build good relationships with the opposition bloc if the civil society and NGOs wish to see certain topics being discussed in Parliament.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY(2/2)

3. VIDEO CLIPS OF MPs ARGUING WITH EACH OTHER GO VIRAL EASILY

- Video clips of public policy debates are less popular and less watched by the public
- This shows what the civil society has to play a better role to promote awareness among the public on the public policy debates that are actually happening in the Parliament but are less noticed compared to politicking antics which go viral easily.
- MPs and their team have to play a better role in educating the public on public policy debates that they do in the Parliament

4. TOPICS AND DEBATES OF MPs HAVE TO BE MORE SUBSTANTIVE

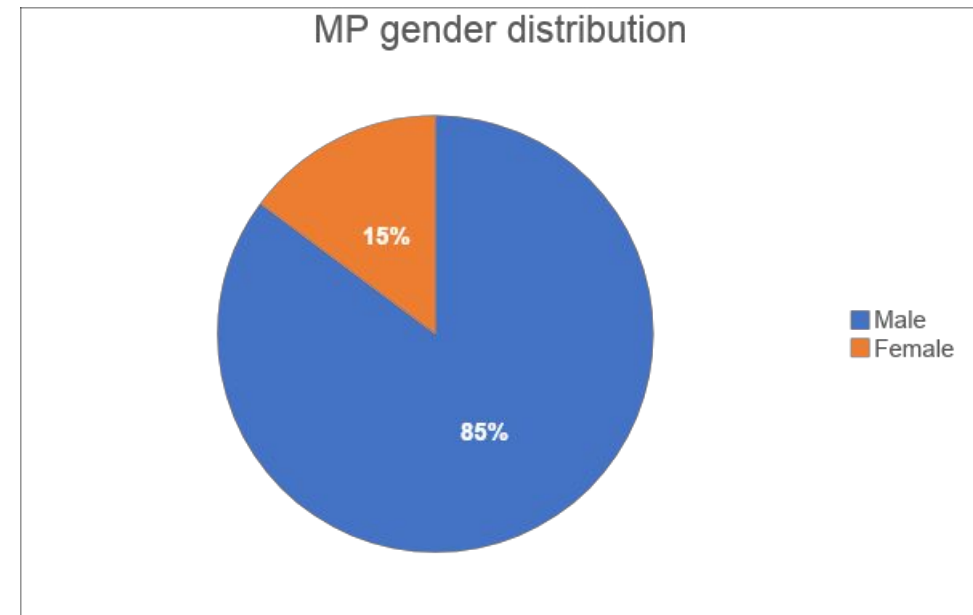
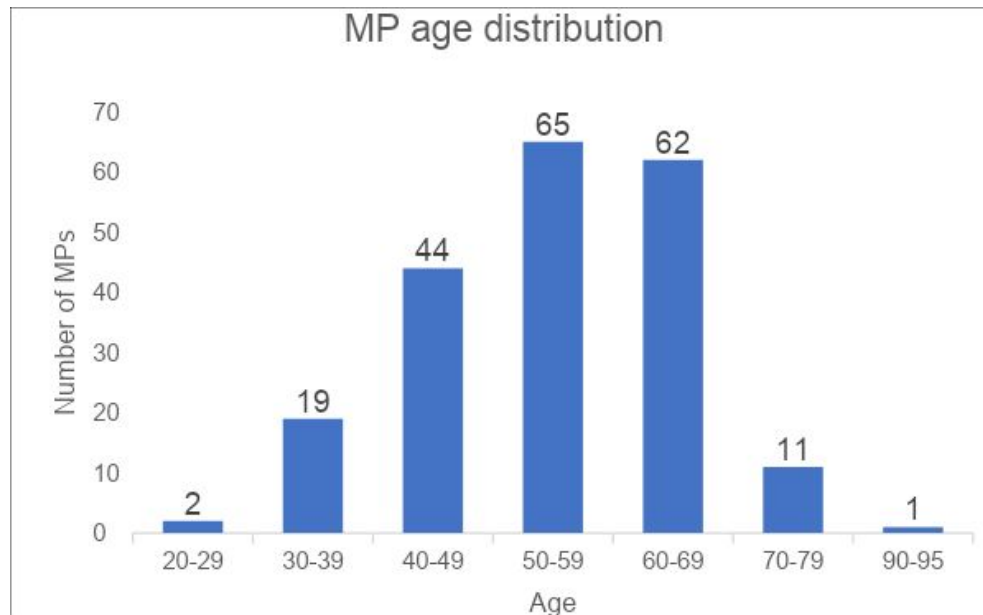
- MPs should be aided by a team of researchers to prepare research materials for Parliamentary debates. MPs currently have the choice to either use the service of Parliamentary researchers through the Electronic Parliament Research Service (EPRS) or for their own research teams.
- MPs should also organise or join stakeholder engagement sessions more frequently with academicians, industry players as well as members of the public to obtain data and input from multiple sources as preparation for Parliamentary debates.

SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

- **The most popular keywords** among MPs are those related to topics such as Infrastructure, Sarawak, Sabah as well as Social Issues. Examples include 'school', 'Sarawak', 'Sabah', 'Rural areas', 'Hospitals' and 'Islam'.
- This shows that **MPs tend to focus on current issues and basic issues** that can attract the attention of voters and not on issues that are less popular such as sustainability, environment, industrial revolution 4.0 and digital economy.
- **However, the debate trends in the verbal questions session are quite different;** the more popular topics among MPs are Economy, International Relations and Religion. This shows that the questions that are more frequently chosen to be answered verbally by the Minister are those related to those topics mentioned above.
- Generally, the keywords '**Sarawak**' and '**Sabah**' are **frequently mentioned but in various different contexts**. For example, "Malaysians in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak". Both words are frequently mentioned by Sarawak MPs and is often related to infrastructure issues.
- Other than topics related to public policy, **political keywords** such as 'corruption', 'RM1 trillion' and 'stupid' are **frequently mentioned** by MPs.
- **Arguments between MPs in Parliament** took up to 53 hours or 30 minutes on average for each day the Parliament was in session. These antics go viral on social media and give the impression to the public that these arguments are the norm in Parliament.

BACKGROUND OF THE 14TH PARLIAMENT

- Age – 62% of MPs are aged 50 and above, while 1/3 of the MPs are 60 and above
- Gender – Only 15% of MPs are females. The ratio of male MPs to female MPs is 6:1



MP STATUTORY DUTIES

1

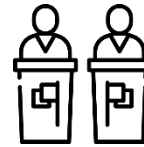
Check and balance



MPs should monitor the actions of government and ask questions or provide policy suggestions

2

Debate on Bills



MPs are responsible for debating and presenting Bills before they are passed

3

Debate on allocations and budget



MPs have the right to provide suggestions or question the allocation and budget presented by the government

STUDY FINDINGS

20 MOST POPULAR KEYWORDS

- 7 keywords that are most frequently spoken by MPs are those related to Sabah and Sarawak, as well as Infrastructure and Religion/Social :
 - Sarawak
 - Schools
 - Sabah
 - Rural Areas
 - Hospitals
 - Islam
 - Villages
- From the 20 most popular keywords in the Parliament, 35% are related to the topic of Infrastructure, followed by Social (15%) and Politics (10%)
- MPs tend to debate basic topics such as infrastructure which are more popular among voters

| No. | Keyword | Frequency | Topic |
|-----|--------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Sarawak | 8,142 | Sabah/Sarawak |
| 2 | Sekolah | 7,008 | Infrastructure |
| 3 | Sabah | 6,633 | Sabah/Sarawak |
| 4 | Rural areas | 3,192 | Social |
| 5 | Hospitals | 2,802 | Infrastructure |
| 6 | Islam | 2,663 | Religion |
| 7 | Villages | 2,415 | Social |
| 8 | Cities | 2,119 | Social |
| 9 | Housing | 1,793 | Infrastructure |
| 10 | China | 1,787 | International relations |
| 11 | GST | 1,712 | Economy |
| 12 | India | 1,457 | Race/Ethnic |
| 13 | Malay | 1,369 | Race/Ethnic |
| 14 | Flood | 1,331 | Infrastructure |
| 15 | Electricity | 1,295 | Infrastructure |
| 16 | Election | 1,266 | Politics |
| 17 | Clinic | 1,182 | Infrastructure |
| 18 | Corruption | 1,084 | Politics |
| 19 | ASEAN | 993 | International relations |
| 20 | Water supply | 851 | Infrastructure |

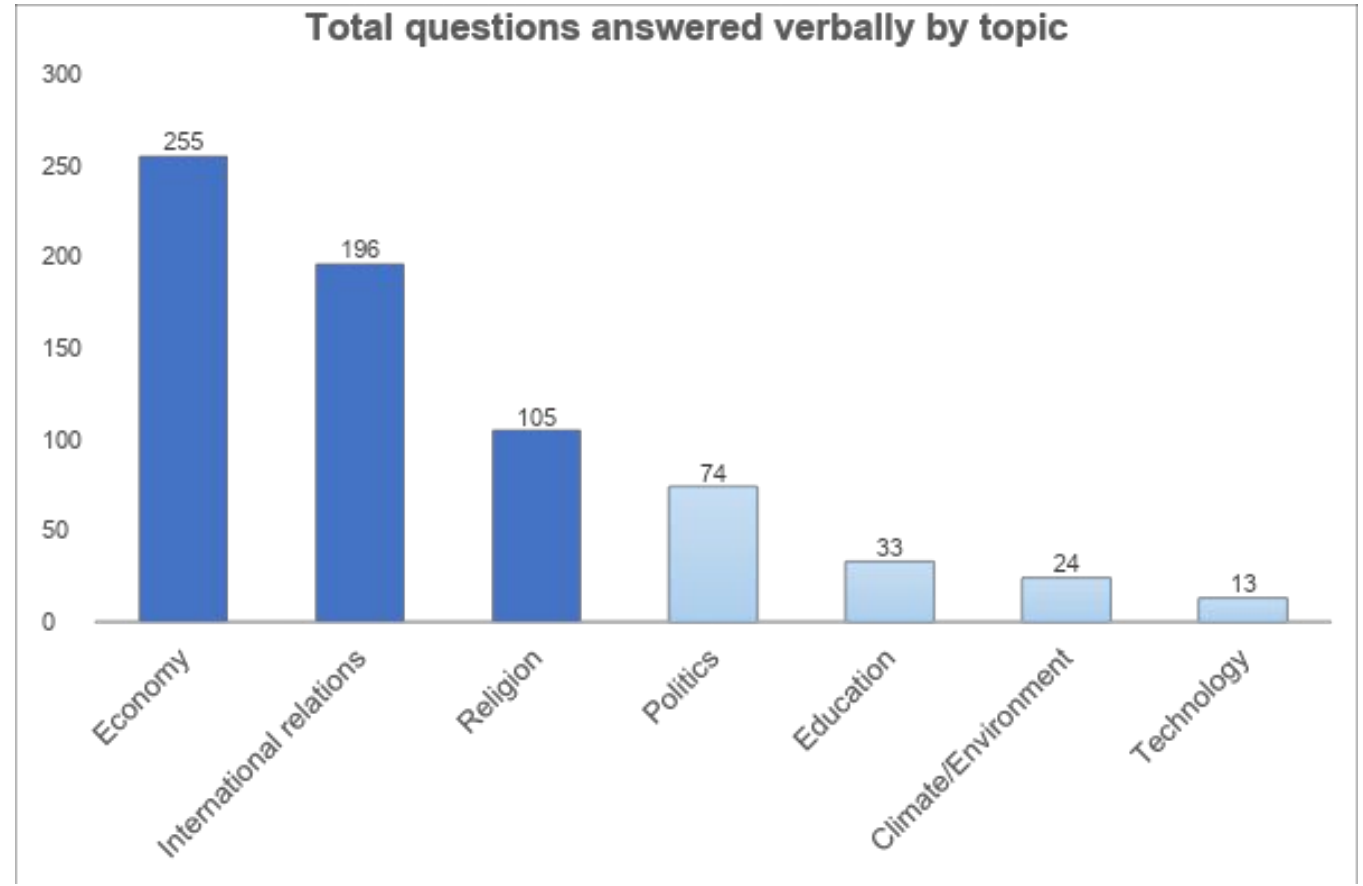
10 LEAST POPULAR KEYWORDS

- From the 10 least popular keywords in the Parliament, 40% are about the topic of Technology and Environment
- MPs rarely debate topics that are non-populist such as technology, environment or even recreational parks

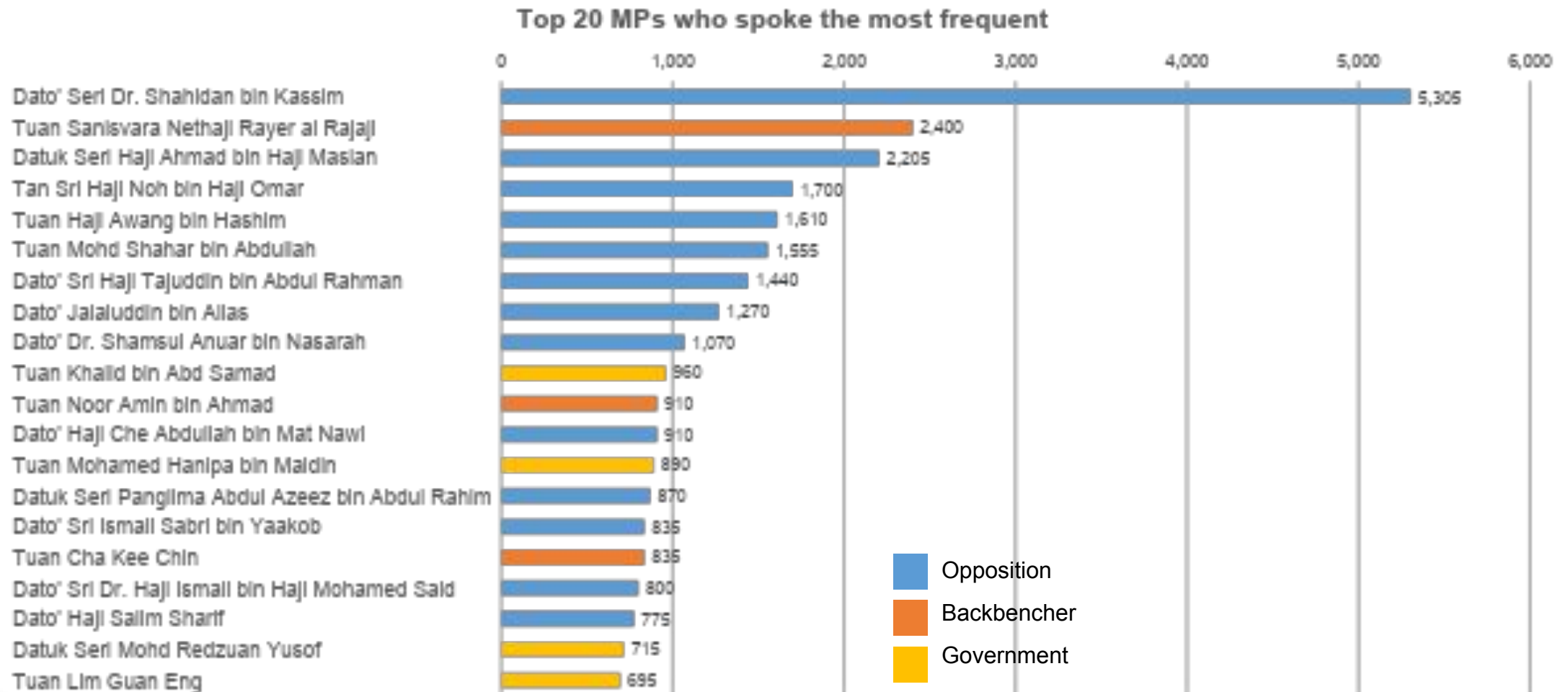
| No. | Keyword | Frequency | Topic |
|-----|--------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1 | IR4.0 | 111 | Technology |
| 2 | Digital economy | 106 | Technology |
| 3 | Plastic waste | 56 | Environment |
| 4 | Drone | 55 | Technology |
| 5 | Illegal logging | 27 | Environment |
| 6 | Air pollution | 20 | Environment |
| 7 | Import export | 16 | International relations |
| 8 | Robot | 14 | Technology |
| 9 | Water pollution | 12 | Environment |
| 10 | Recreational parks | 4 | Infrastructure |

Although questions from MPs are mostly related to infrastructure, race and social, the questions chosen in the Verbal Answer session relates to the topics [1] Economy, [2] International Relations and [3] Religion

| No. | Topic | Total questions from MPs (written & verbal) |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Infrastructure | 809 |
| 2 | Race | 686 |
| 3 | Social | 430 |
| 4 | Economy | 340 |
| 5 | International Relations | 200 |
| 6 | Religion | 110 |
| 7 | Politics | 74 |
| 8 | Education | 35 |
| 9 | Climate/Environment | 26 |
| 10 | Technology | 15 |



Opposition MPs speak the most frequent and drive the direction and debate topics in the Parliament



Do MPs that speak frequently like to touch upon public policy matters?

Top 10 MP who spoke the most frequent

| No. | MP name | Frequency of speech |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Dato' Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim | 5,305 |
| 2 | Tuan Sanisvara Nethaji Rayer al Rajaji | 2,400 |
| 3 | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan | 2,205 |
| 4 | Tan Sri Haji Noh bin Haji Omar | 1,700 |
| 5 | Tuan Haji Awang bin Hashim | 1,610 |
| 6 | Tuan Mohd Shahar bin Abdullah | 1,555 |
| 7 | Dato' Sri Haji Tajuddin bin Abdul Rahman | 1,440 |
| 8 | Dato' Jalaluddin bin Alias | 1,270 |
| 9 | Dato' Dr. Shamsul Anuar bin Nasarah | 1,070 |
| 10 | Tuan Khalid bin Abd Samad | 960 |

Top 10 MP who spoke the most public policy keywords

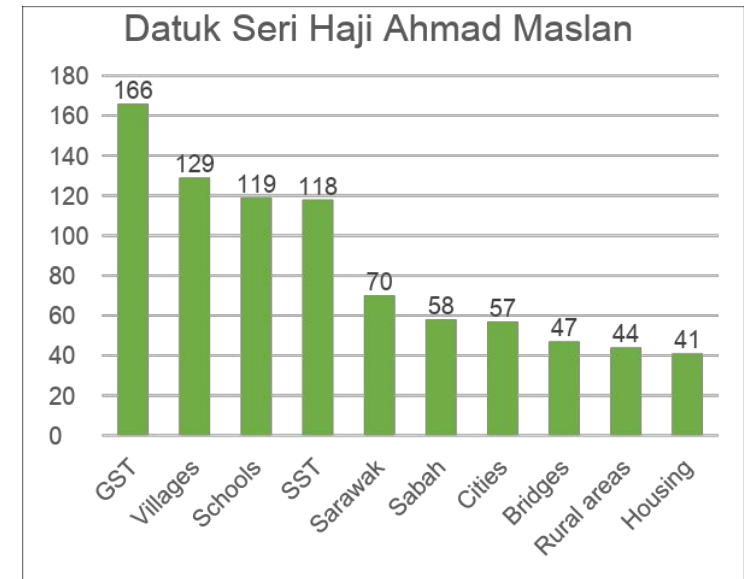
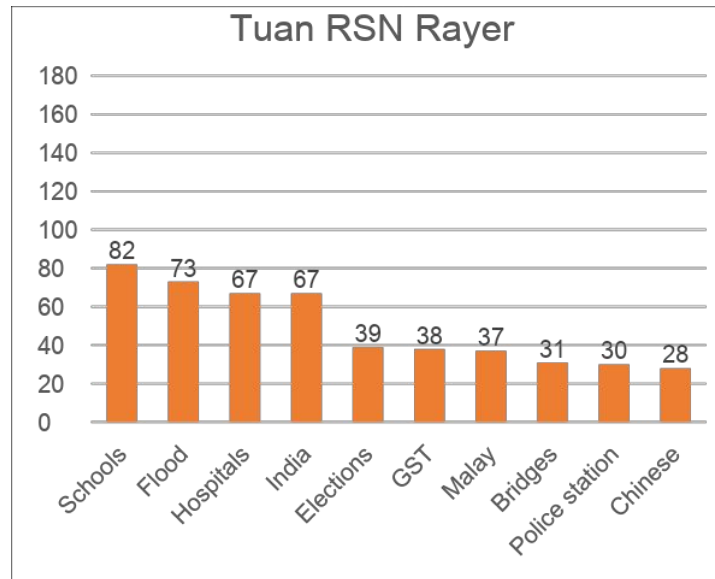
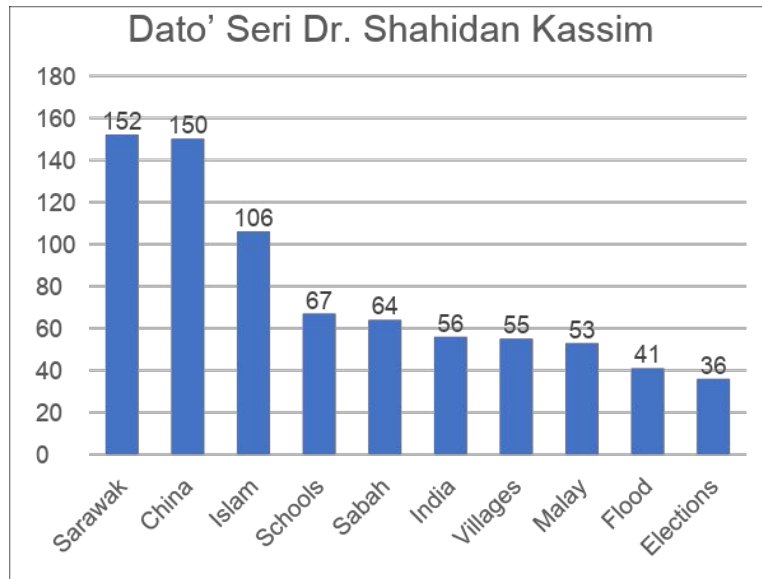
| No. | MP Name | Frequency of saying public policy keywords |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Dr. Maszlee bin Malik | 1,447 |
| 2 | Tuan Lukanisman bin Awang Sauni | 1,368 |
| 3 | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan | 1,214 |
| 4 | Dato' Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim | 1,039 |
| 5 | Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Hassan | 1,023 |
| 6 | Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed | 812 |
| 7 | Tuan Lim Guan Eng | 793 |
| 8 | Dr. Haji Dzulkefly bin Ahmad | 783 |
| 9 | Puan Teo Nie Ching | 712 |
| 10 | Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri | 709 |

Key findings

- MPs that speak frequently do not necessarily discuss meaningful topics
- Instead, MPs that speak less frequent may speak more frequent on relevant topics

MPs that speak the most frequent do not necessarily speak about topics related to public policy

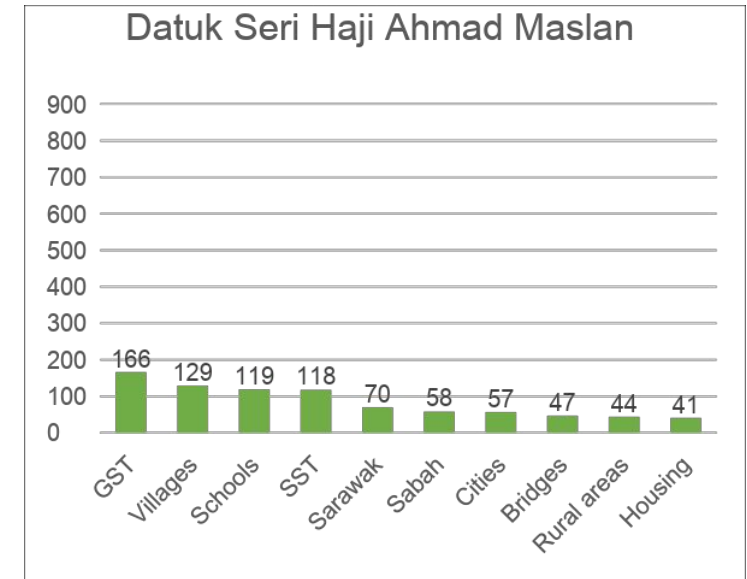
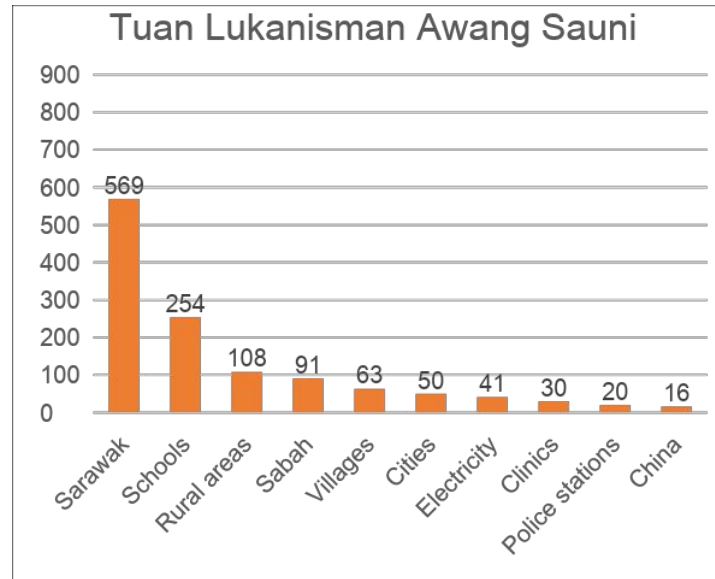
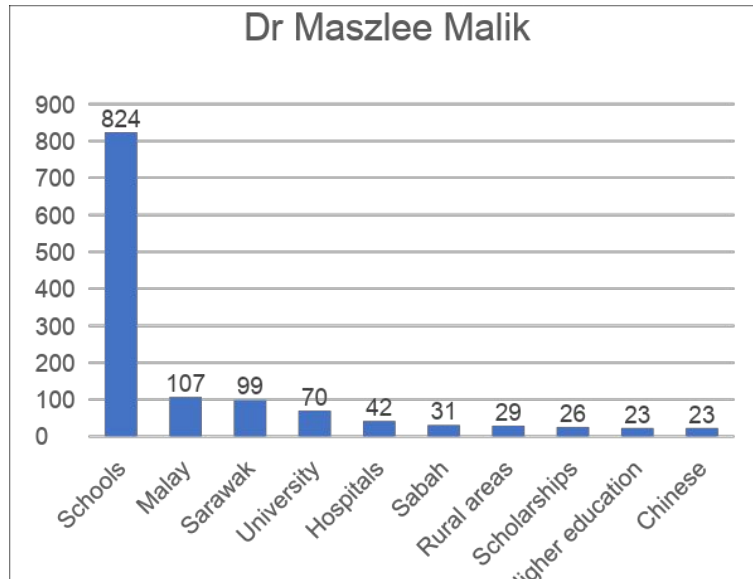
Top 10 Keywords for The Top 3 MPs That Spoke The Most Frequent



| | Dato' Seri Dr. Shahidan Kassim | Tuan RSN Rayer | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad Maslan |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| Frequency of speech | 5,305 | 2,400 | 2,205 |
| Frequency of speaking public policy keywords | 1,039 | 695 | 1,214 |

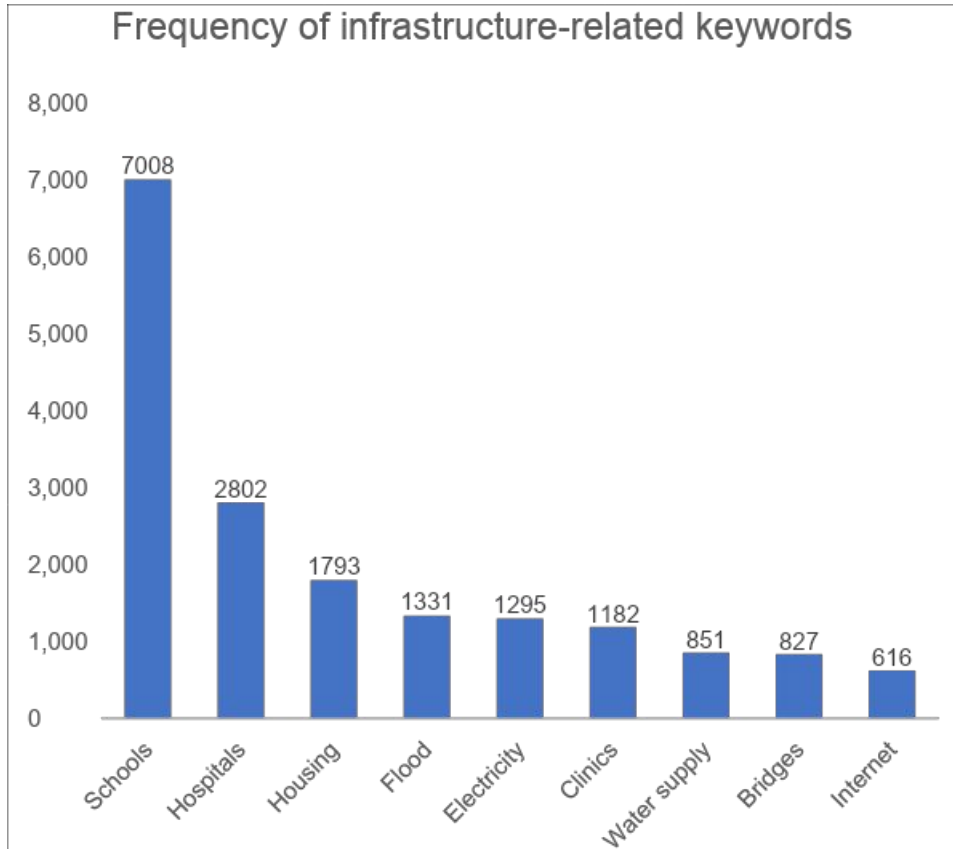
There are also MPs who do not speak frequently but often debate on public policy issues

Top 10 Keywords for The Top 3 MPs with The Most Public Policy Keyword Hits



| | Dr Maszlee Malik | Tuan Lukanisman Awang Sauni | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad Maslan |
|--|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Frequency of speech | 415 | 360 | 2,205 |
| Frequency of speaking public policy keywords | 1,447 | 1,368 | 1,214 |

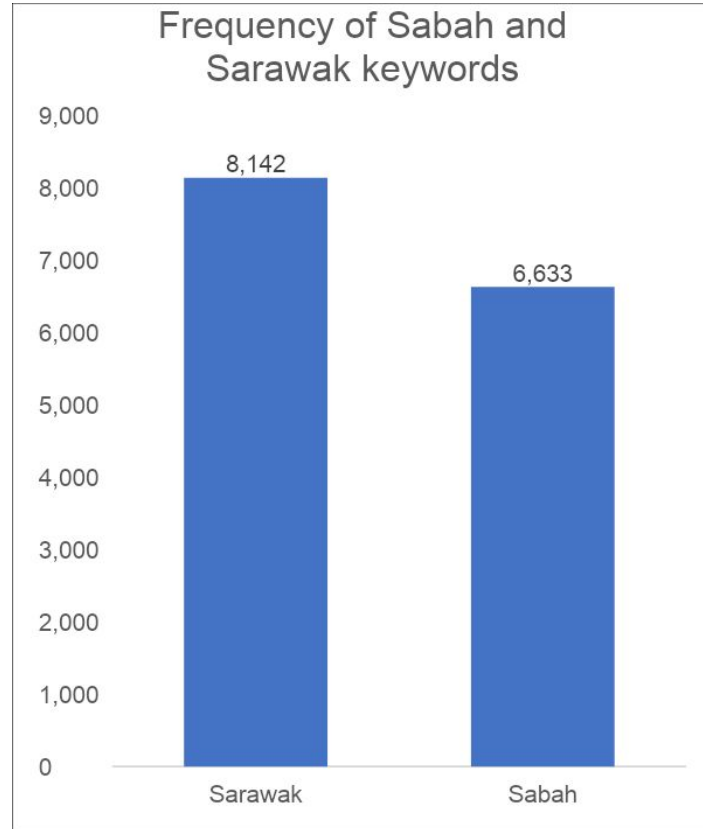
Infrastructure-related keywords are the most popular – Schools, hospitals, housing, flood, electricity



| No. | MP name | MP | Frequency |
|-----|---|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Dr. Maszlee bin Malik | Government | 991 |
| 2 | Dr. Haji Dzulkefly bin Ahmad | Government | 627 |
| 3 | Puan Teo Nie Ching | Government | 497 |
| 4 | Tuan Lukanisman bin Awang Sauni | Opposition | 424 |
| 5 | Dr. Lee Boon Chye | Government | 391 |
| 6 | Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Hassan | Backbencher | 352 |
| 7 | Tuan Sanisvara Nethaji Rayer a/l Rajaji | Backbencher | 342 |
| 8 | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan | Opposition | 333 |
| 9 | Puan Yeo Bee Yin | Government | 332 |
| 10 | Dato' Dr. Xavier Jayakumar | Government | 316 |

| No. | Example of usage context |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Affordable housing |
| 2 | Establishment of Vision School to foster national unity |
| 3 | Demolishing a damaged school building and replacing the building |
| 4 | Internet connection in rural schools |
| 5 | Hospital upgrades |

'Sarawak' and 'Sabah' keywords encompass many topics such as education, infrastructure, international relations, economy, and involves MPs from both blocs



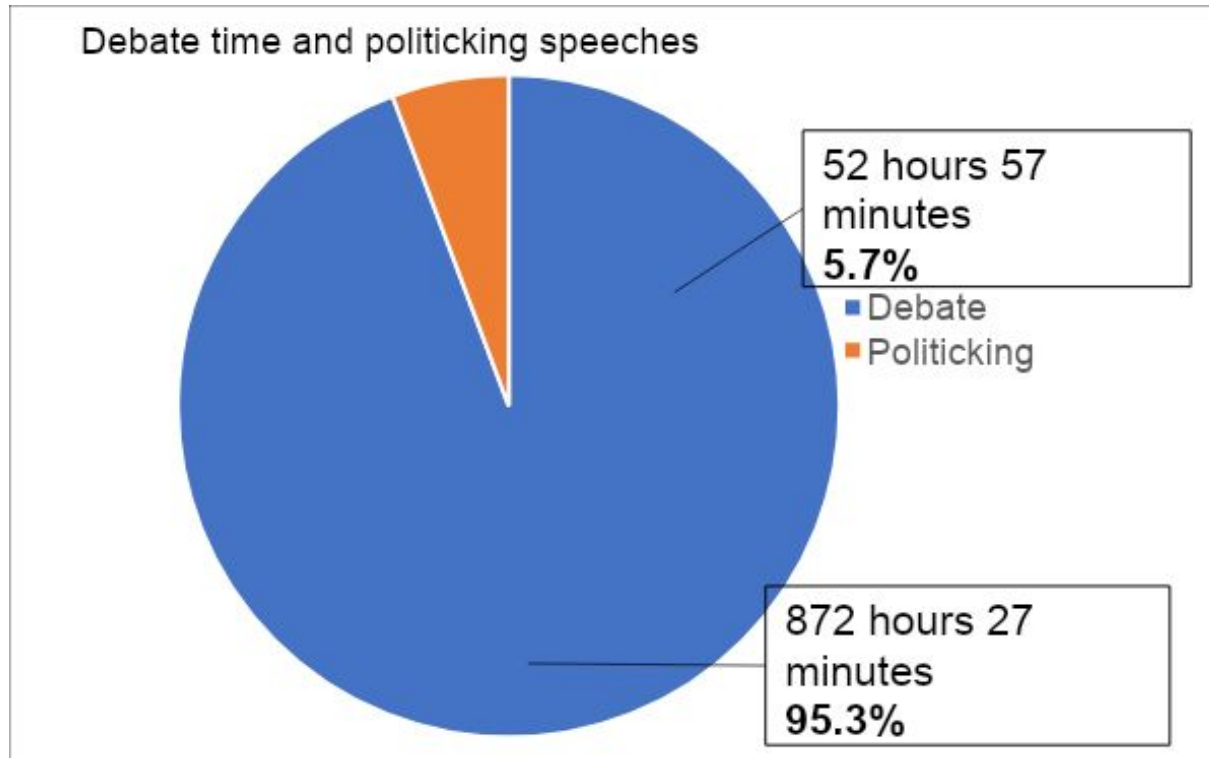
| No. | MP name | MP | Frequency |
|-----|--|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Tuan Lukanisman bin Awang Sauni | Opposition | 660 |
| 2 | Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri | Opposition | 499 |
| 3 | Dr. Kelvin Yii Lee Wuen | Backbencher | 392 |
| 4 | Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Hassan | Backbencher | 377 |
| 5 | Dato' Sri Dr. Haji Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar | Opposition | 347 |
| 6 | Tuan Chan Foong Hin | Backbencher | 341 |
| 7 | Datuk Seri Panglima Madius Tangau | Backbencher | 331 |
| 8 | Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi | Opposition | 321 |
| 9 | Datuk Ugak anak Kumbong | Opposition | 296 |
| 10 | Tuan Jonathan bin Yasin | Opposition | 285 |

| No. | Example of usage context |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Intrusions by foreign powers outside Sabah and Sarawak waters |
| 2 | Lack of water supply in Sabah |
| 3 | Suggestion to build more boarding schools in Sabah |
| 4 | Sabah fishing industry |
| 5 | Sabah and Sarawak as equal partners in Federation of Malaysia |

Key findings

- MPs from both sides of the divide are interested in Sabah and Sarawak issues
- National security issues are often mentioned together with Sabah and Sarawak
- Malaysia Agreement 1963 discussed in Parliament

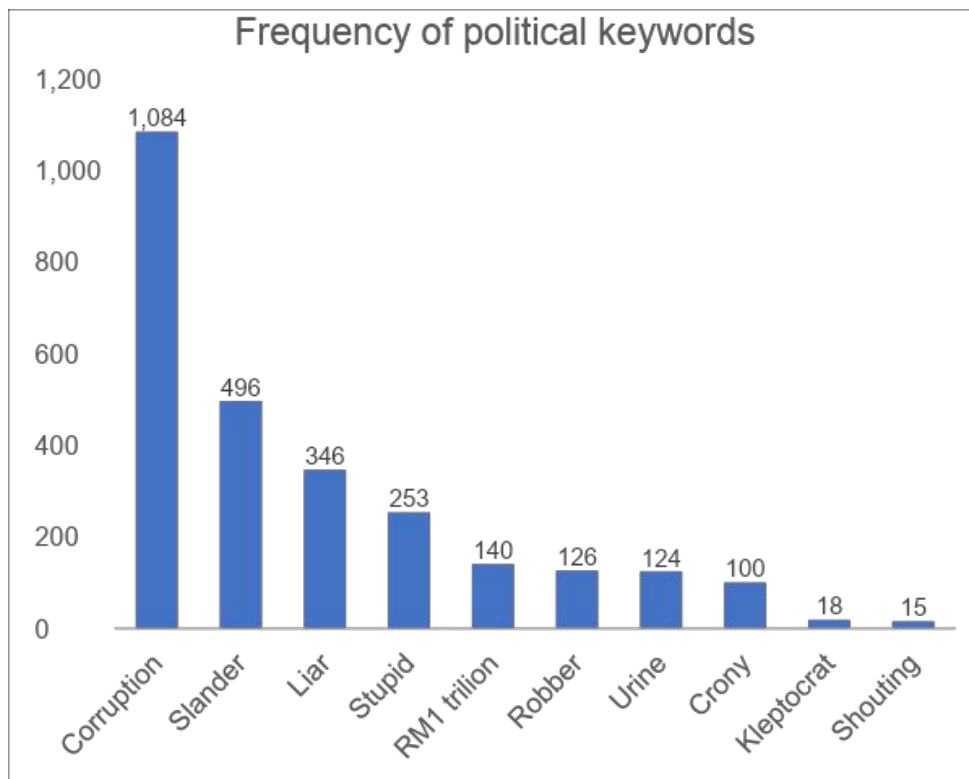
Arguments between MPs have taken up 53 hours (5.7%) during the year 2018-2019, which should have been used for public policy debates



Key findings

- On average, 30 minutes are wasted each day for politicking in Dewan Rakyat
- Although merely 6%, video clips of MPs arguing are more viral on social media compared to video clips of public policy debates

Political keywords such as 'corruption', 'slander', 'stupid' is frequently mentioned by MPs

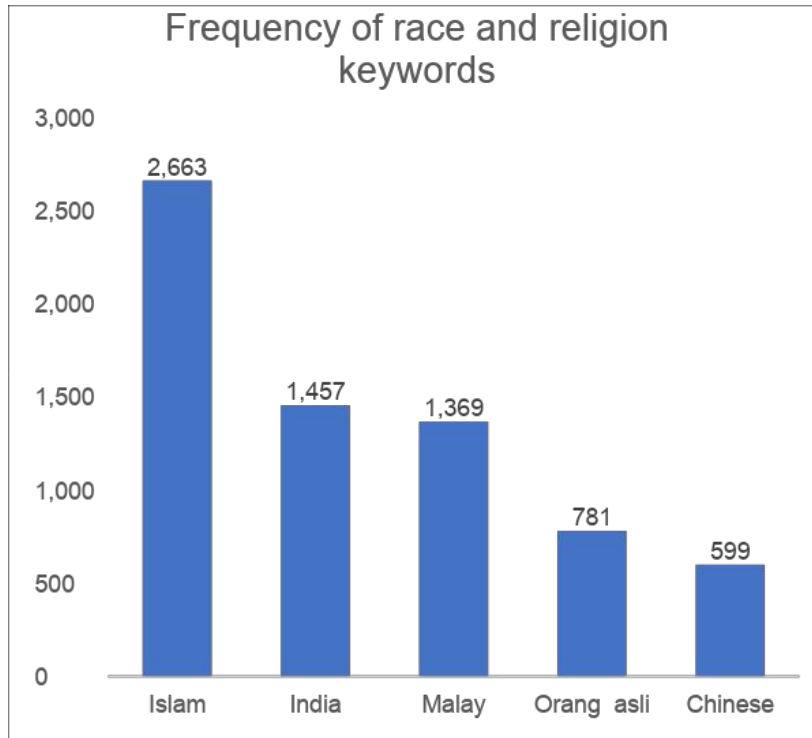


| No. | MP name | MP | Frequency |
|-----|--|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Tuan Sanisvara Nethaji Rayer a/l Rajaji | Backbencher | 203 |
| 2 | Dato' Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim | Opposition | 167 |
| 3 | Tan Sri Haji Noh bin Haji Omar | Opposition | 143 |
| 4 | Tuan Haji Awang bin Hashim | Opposition | 94 |
| 5 | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan | Opposition | 77 |
| 6 | Tuan Lim Guan Eng | Government | 65 |
| 7 | Tuan Mohamed Hanipa bin Maidin | Government | 54 |
| 8 | Dato' Sri Haji Tajuddin bin Abdul Rahman | Opposition | 53 |
| 9 | Tuan Khoo Poay Tiong | Backbencher | 53 |
| 10 | Dato' Haji Che Abdullah bin Mat Nawi | Opposition | 48 |

Key findings

- MPs frequently mention 'corruption'. This word can be linked with anti-corruption or accusations towards other MPs
- The RM1 trillion debt is frequently mentioned, related to the 1MDB issue

Keywords related to race and religion are quite popular in Parliament such as Islam (#6), Malay (#13), Chinese (#26)



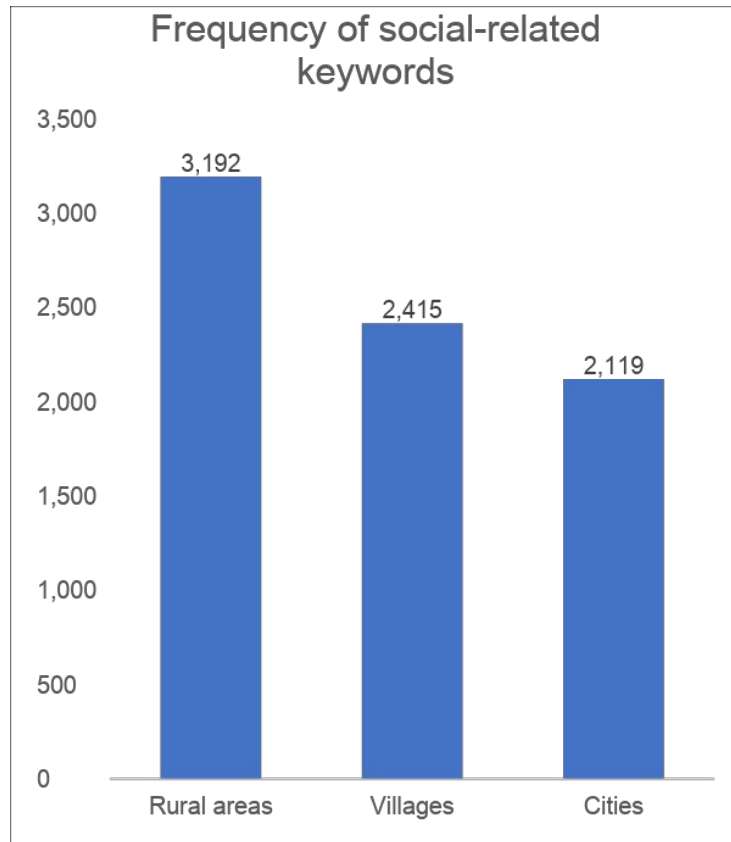
Key findings

- 'India' keyword spoken more frequent than 'Malay' as the word 'India' is used in two contexts, which are India as a country and India as an ethnicity
- The issue of palm oil boycott is linked to the international trade with India (country)

| No. | MP name | MP | Frequency |
|-----|---|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Dato' Dr. Mohd Khairuddin bin Aman Razali | Opposition | 323 |
| 2 | Dato' Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim | Opposition | 297 |
| 3 | Dato' Seri Dr. Santhara | Backbencher | 213 |
| 4 | Tuan Waytha Moorthy a/l Ponnusamy | Government | 209 |
| 5 | Datuk Seri Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa | Government | 197 |
| 6 | Puan Fuziah binti Salleh | Government | 187 |
| 7 | Dato' Hajah Siti Zailah binti Mohd Yusof | Opposition | 183 |
| 8 | Tuan Sanisvara Nethaji Rayer a/l Rajaji | Backbencher | 170 |
| 9 | Dr. Maszlee bin Malik | Government | 166 |
| 10 | Dato' Sri Haji Tajuddin bin Abdul Rahman | Opposition | 165 |

| No. | Example of usage context |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Trade agreement between Malaysia and India |
| 2 | Economic development of the Malay community |
| 3 | Malay Language as the catalyst for national unity |
| 4 | <i>Orang asli</i> land |
| 5 | University offers to Indian students |

Rural, vilages, and city issues are also focused upon by MPs – topics include infrastructure, social problems and economy



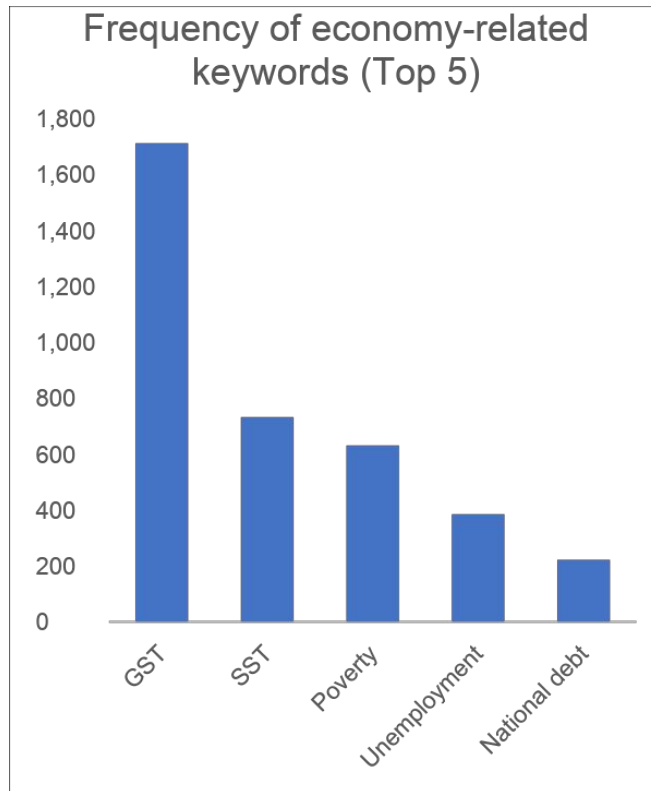
| No. | MP name | MP | Frequency |
|-----|---------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Tuan Sivarasa Rasiah | Government | 335 |
| 2 | Datuk Seri Rina binti Mohd Harun | Government | 253 |
| 3 | Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Hassan | Backbencher | 249 |
| 4 | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan | Opposition | 234 |
| 5 | Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed | Backbencher | 230 |
| 6 | Tuan Lukanisman bin Awang Sauni | Opposition | 221 |
| 7 | Datin Mastura binti Mohd Yazid | Opposition | 191 |
| 8 | Tuan Cha Kee Chin | Backbencher | 164 |
| 9 | Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob | Opposition | 141 |
| 10 | Datuk Halimah binti Mohamed Sadique | Opposition | 133 |

| No. | Example of usage context |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Rural Electrification Scheme |
| 2 | Correction of imbalance in rural development in Sabah and Sarawak |
| 3 | Training for villagers to use big data in the marketing process of village products |
| 4 | Increase the number of street lights in villages |
| 5 | Construction of 'flyovers' in cities |

Key findings

- Balanced interest from government and opposition MPs
- Rural issues usually include construction of infrastructure and economic situation

Popular economy-related keywords are GST, SST, poverty. These keywords garner the attention of MPs from all blocs



Key findings

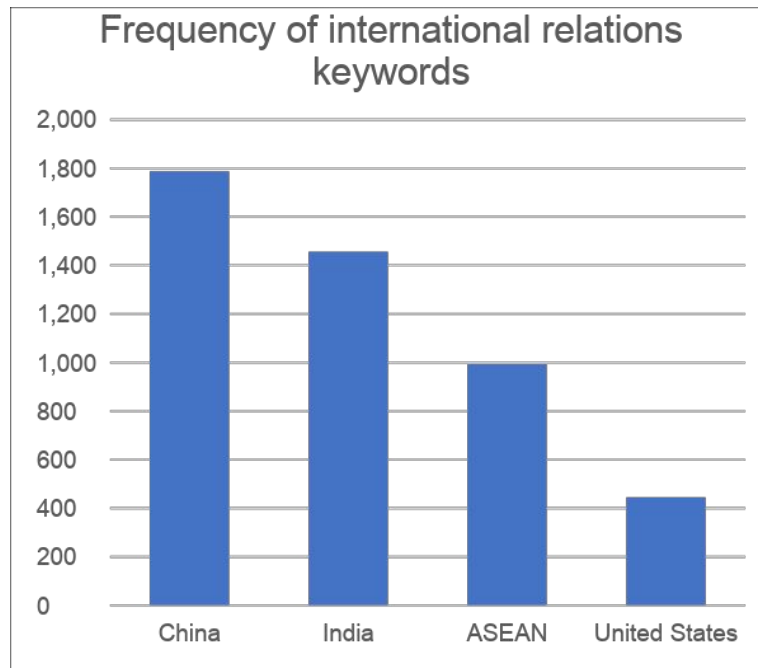
- GST was a hot issue in Dewan Rakyat, showing that the abolishment of GST is an issue that attracted the interest of many MPs as it also had political connotations

| No. | MP name | MP | Frequency |
|-----|--|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan | Opposition | 310 |
| 2 | Brig. Jen. Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar | Opposition | 282 |
| 3 | Tuan Lim Guan Eng | Government | 268 |
| 4 | Tuan Haji Awang bin Hashim | Opposition | 108 |
| 5 | Tuan Haji Akmal Nasrullah bin Mohd Nasir | Backbencher | 91 |
| 6 | Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed | Backbencher | 90 |
| 7 | Dato' Dr. Haji Noor Azmi bin Ghazali | Backbencher | 83 |
| 8 | Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob | Opposition | 73 |
| 9 | Datuk Seri Dr. Ronald Kiandee | Backbencher | 73 |
| 10 | Dato' Haji Amiruddin bin Hamzah | Government | 68 |

No. Example of usage context

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Abolishment of Goods and Services Tax (GST) |
| 2 | GST refunds |
| 3 | Transition period from GST to Sales and Service Tax |
| 4 | Urban poverty |
| 5 | Lifting the rural people out of the poverty bubbly |

‘China’, ‘India’, ‘ASEAN’ and ‘United States’ are popular for comparisons to Malaysia’s economic performance. 2019 witnessed a few geopolitical issues (e.g. US-China trade war) as well as international trade issues (e.g. palm oil boycott). This shows that Parliamentary debates are influenced by current issues in regional and global levels



Key findings

- MPs are concerned by current developments in Malaysia’s international relations, especially popular issues such as the trade war and palm oil boycotts

| No. | MP Name | MP | Frequency |
|-----|--|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | Dato’ Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim [Arau] | Opposition | 213 |
| 2 | Tuan Mohamad bin Sabu [Kota Raja] | Government | 133 |
| 3 | Tuan Sanisvara Nethaji Rayer a/l Rajaji [Jelutong] | Backbencher | 127 |
| 4 | Tuan Lim Guan Eng [Bagan] | Government | 124 |
| 5 | Puan Teresa Kok Suh Sim [Seputeh] | Government | 123 |
| 6 | Tuan Wong Hon Wai [Bukit Bendera] | Backbencher | 117 |
| 7 | Dato’ Saifuddin Abdullah [Indera Mahkota] | Government | 115 |
| 8 | Dato’ Seri Dr. Santhara [Segamat] | Backbencher | 113 |
| 9 | Dr. Ong Kian Ming [Bangi] | Government | 109 |
| 10 | Dato’ Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed [Jeli] | Backbencher | 102 |

| No. | Example of usage context |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Closer cooperation with China via memorandum |
| 2 | Palm oil exports to China and India |
| 3 | ASEAN Conference |
| 4 | Trade conflict between United States and China |
| 5 | ASEAN special economic hub |

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

For MPs



There needs to be a special allocation for research teams to help MPs with debate preparation



Make use of the research service in Parliament via Electronic Parliament Research Service (EPRS)



Have public stakeholder engagement sessions for a more comprehensive and up-to-date data and input, together with academicians, industry players and the public



Reduce politicking, increase focus on public policy discussions



Parliament to establish Institute of Parliamentary Affairs, a training institute that serves as the centre of excellence for all parliamentary affairs which include providing training to MPs, conducting relevant research to support MPs and undertake study for continuous Parliamentary reform to uphold democratic values

For Civil Societies and Citizens



Increase cooperation with MP to always provide inputs and ideas for debates



Take the initiative to evaluate the performance of MPs in Parliament comprehensively and convey the message to the public to produce smart voters, who are not merely influenced by viral videos on social media



Make recordings of discussion in select committees available to the public. This will facilitate more accountability and stimulate more research into parliamentary proceedings.

CONCLUSION

1. Dewan Rakyat is frequently used as a politicking arena to fish for votes, while debates on public policy are not prioritised by MPs
2. Debate topics in Parliament are driven by Opposition MPs, while debate topics by Government MPs (i.e. Executive Members) are limited to what is questioned by other MPs
3. Video clips of MPs bickering with each go viral easily compared to videos of public policy debates – This is an opportunity for NGOs to increase the awareness of the public on public policy debates that are actually happening in the Dewan Rakyat but are less cared out compared to politicking antics that go viral easily
4. MPs debate topics and content have to be more substantive in general. MPs need to be provided with additional resources such as their own research team. MPs should also organise or participate more frequently in stakeholder engagements with academicians, industry players and members of the public to obtain data and input from many parties before preparing debate materials in the Parliament

Thank You

For further questions, please contact admin@irdp.my