

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

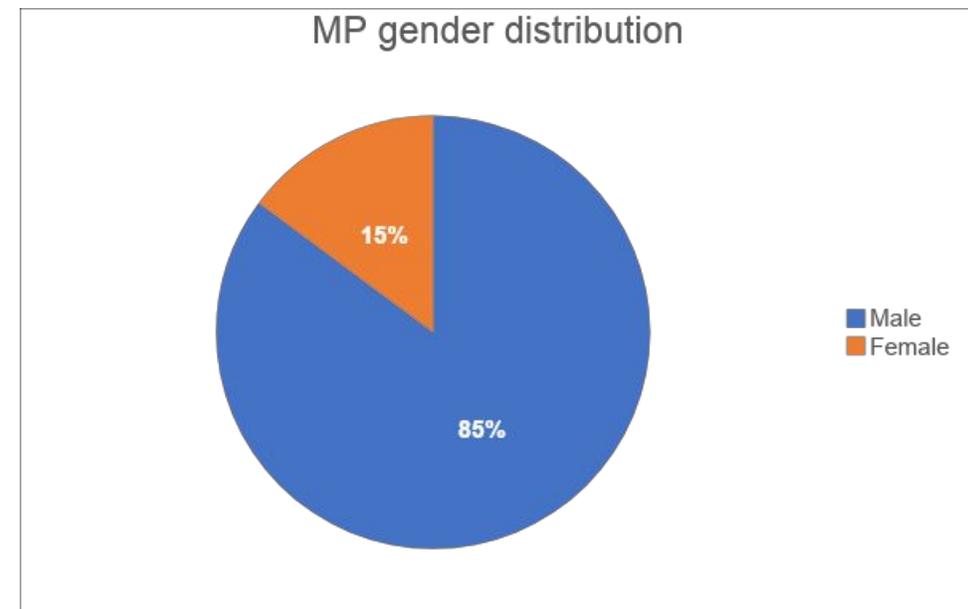
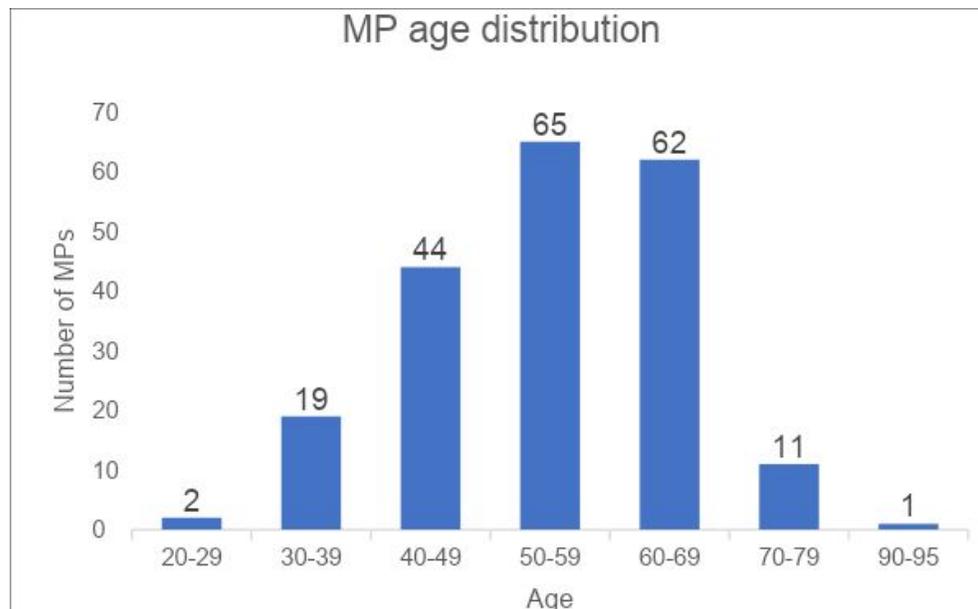
- MPs should be aided by a team of researchers to prepare research materials for Parliamentary debates. MPs currently have the choice to either use the service of Parliamentary researchers through the Electronic Parliament Research Service (EPRS) or for their own research teams.
- MPs should also organise 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

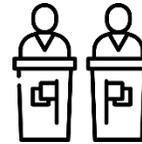
Check and balance



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

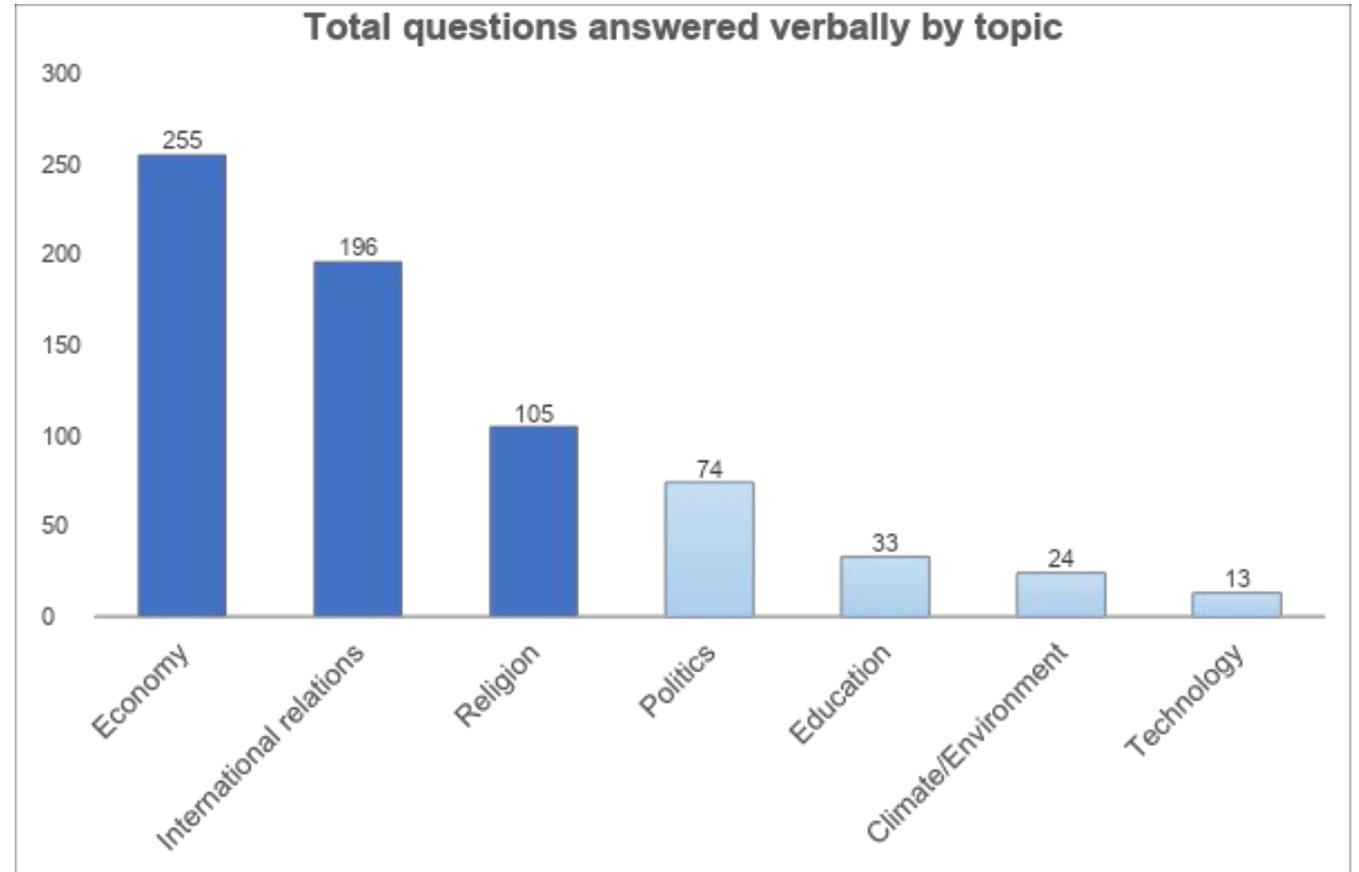
10 LEAST POPULAR KEYWORDS

- 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

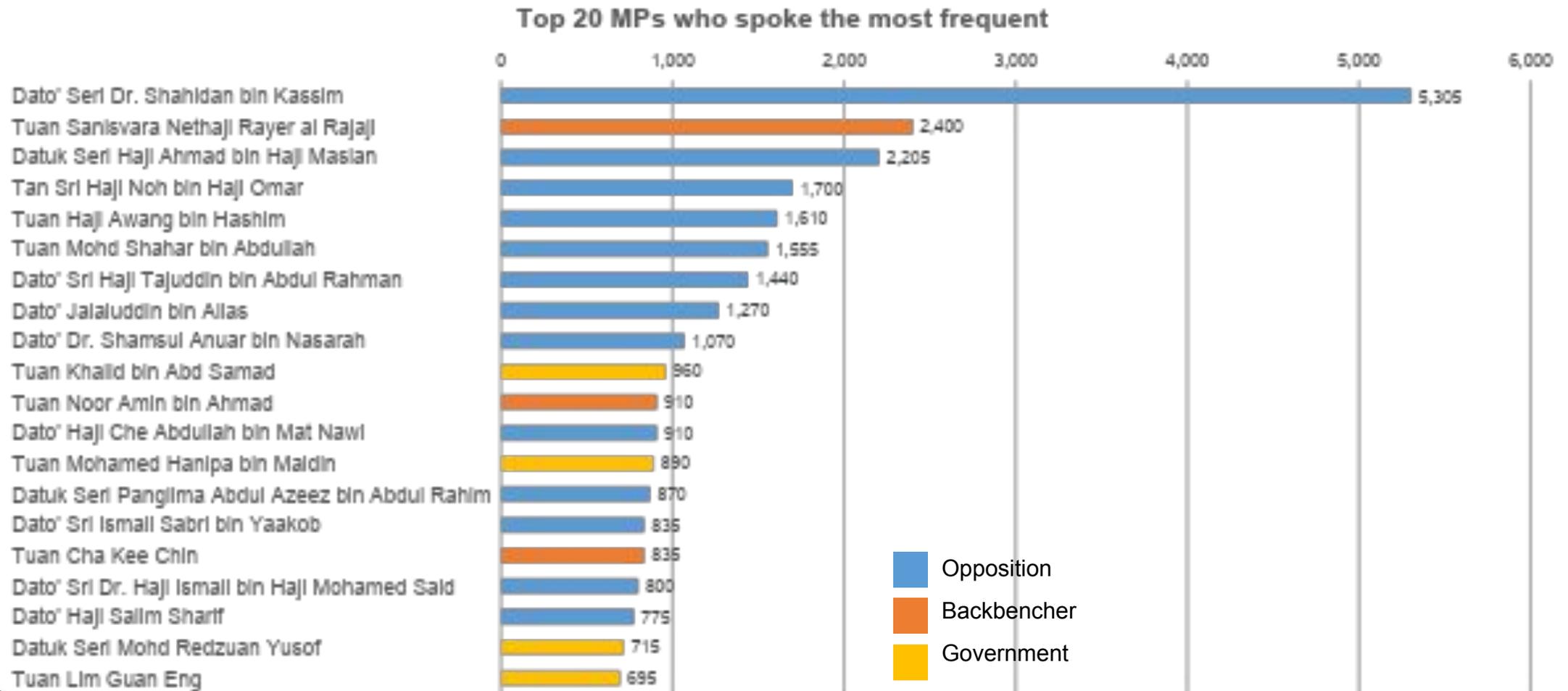
No.	Keyword	Frequency	Topic
1	IR4.0	111	Technology
2	Digital economy	106	Technology
3	Plastic waste	56	Environment
4	Drone	55	Technology
5	Illegal logging	27	Environment
6	Air pollution	20	Environment
7	Import export	16	International relations
8	Robot	14	Technology
9	Water pollution	12	Environment
10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

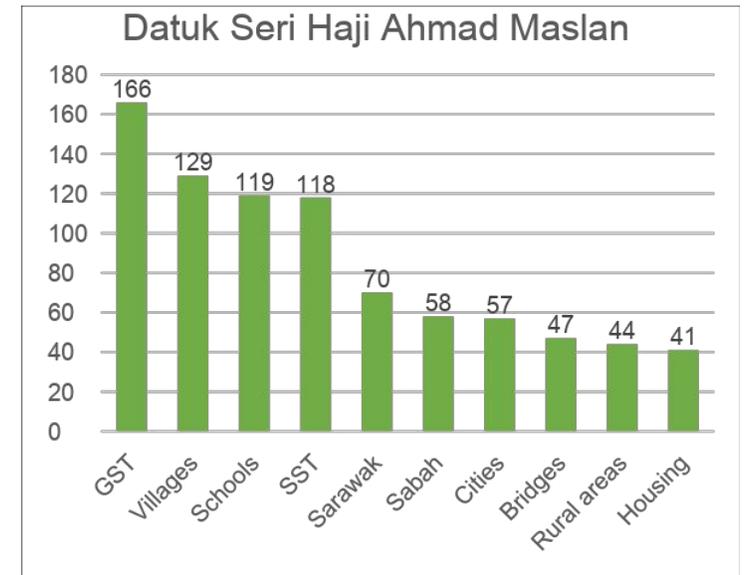
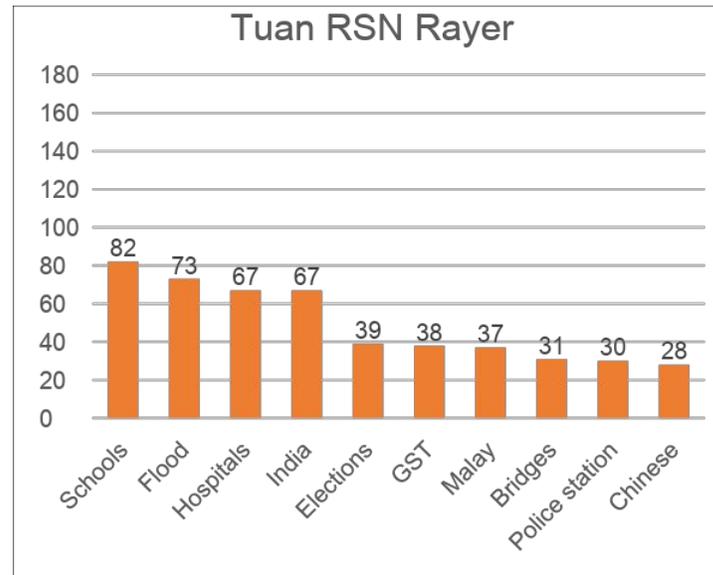
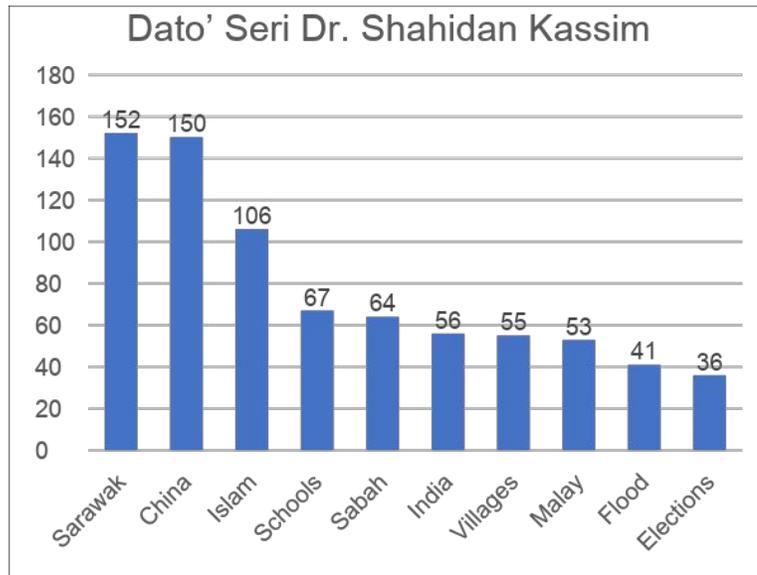
No.	MP Name	Frequency of saying public policy keywords
1	Dr. Maszlee bin Malik	1,447
2	Tuan Lukanisman bin Awang Sauni	1,368
3	Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan	1,214
4	Dato' Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim	1,039
5	Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Hassan	1,023
6	Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed	812
7	Tuan Lim Guan 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

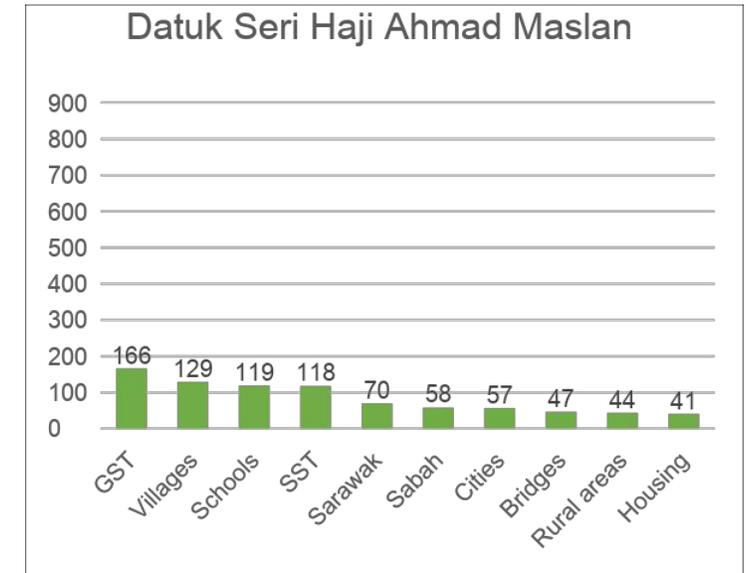
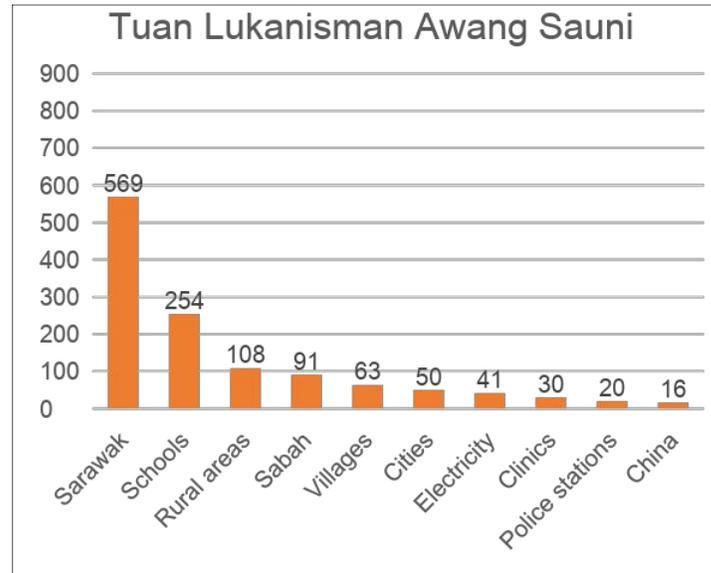
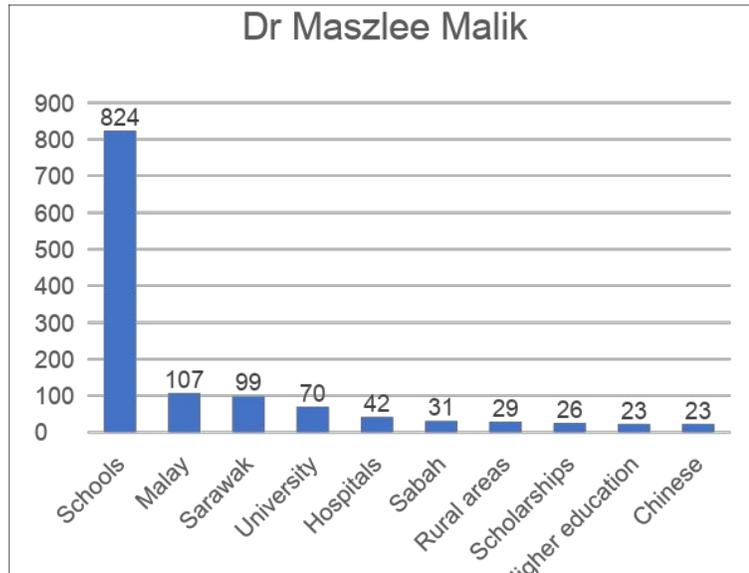
Top 10 Keywords for The Top 3 MPs That Spoke The Most Frequent



	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

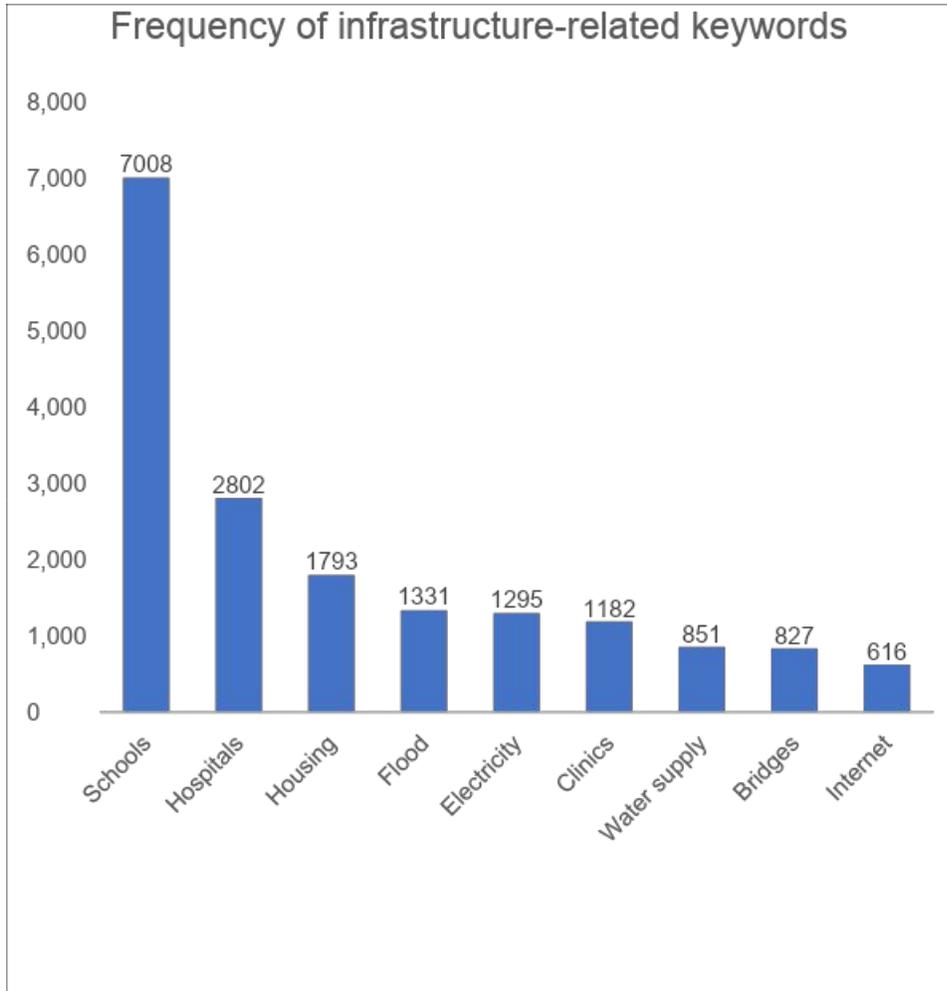
There are also MPs who do not speak frequently but often debate on public policy issues

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

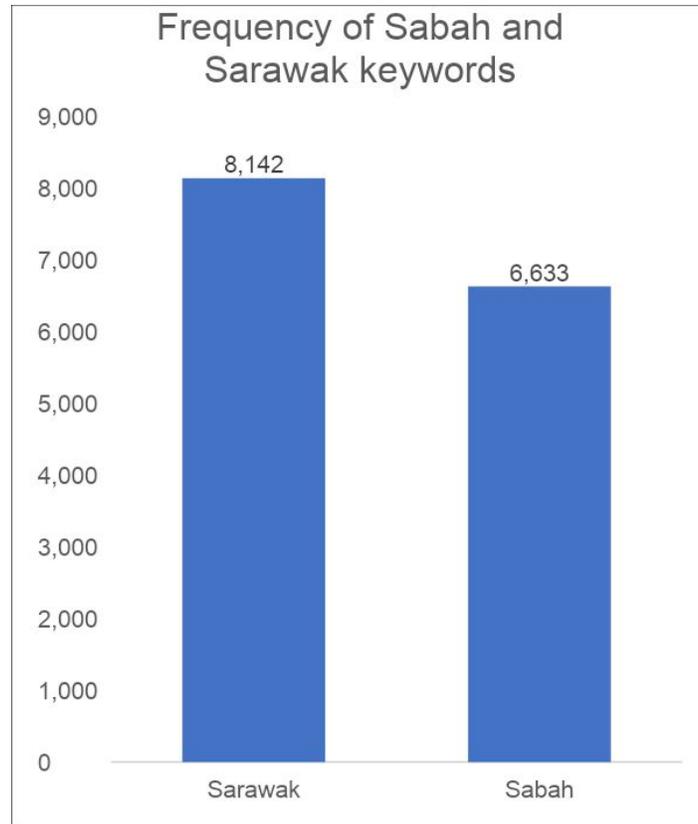
Infrastructure-related keywords are the most popular – Schools, hospitals, housing, flood, electricity



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



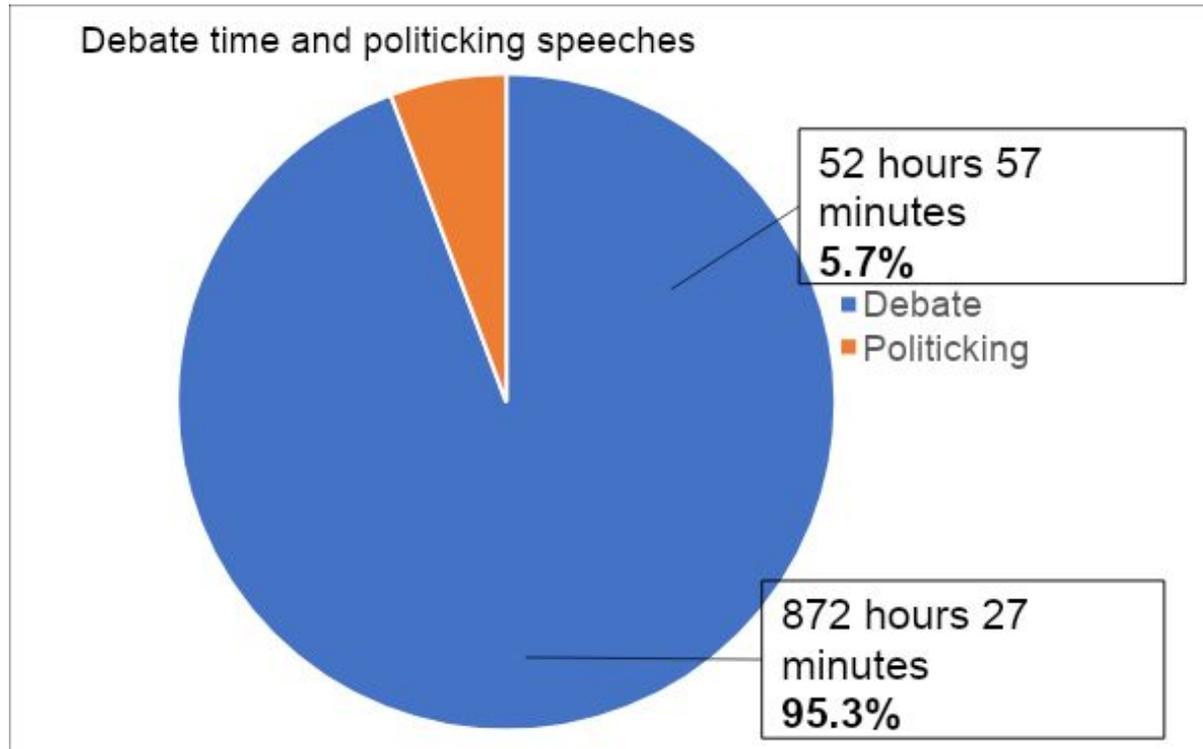
No.	MP name	MP	Frequency
1	Tuan Lukanisman bin Awang Sauni	Opposition	660
2	Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri	Opposition	499
3	Dr. Kelvin Yii Lee Wuen	Backbencher	392
4	Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Hassan	Backbencher	377
5	Dato' Sri Dr. Haji Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar	Opposition	347
6	Tuan Chan Foong Hin	Backbencher	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

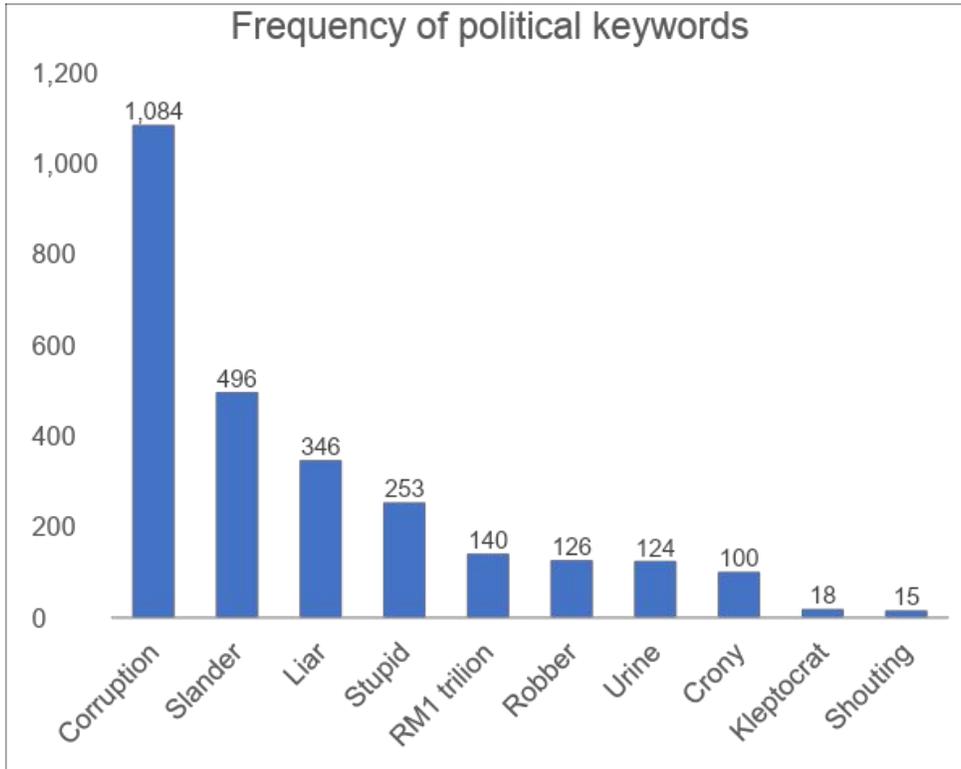
Arguments between MPs have taken up 53 hours (5.7%) during the year 2018-2019, which should have been used for public policy debates



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

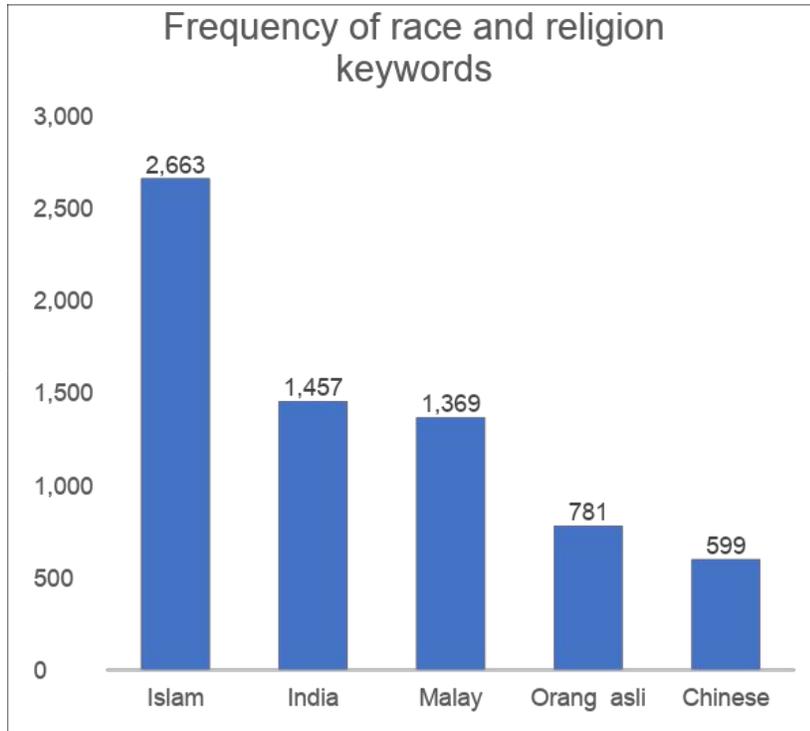


No.	MP name	MP	Frequency
1	Tuan Sanisvara Nethaji Rayer a/l Rajaji	Backbencher	203
2	Dato' Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim	Opposition	167
3	Tan Sri Haji Noh bin Haji Omar	Opposition	143
4	Tuan Haji Awang bin Hashim	Opposition	94
5	Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan	Opposition	77
6	Tuan Lim Guan Eng	Government	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)



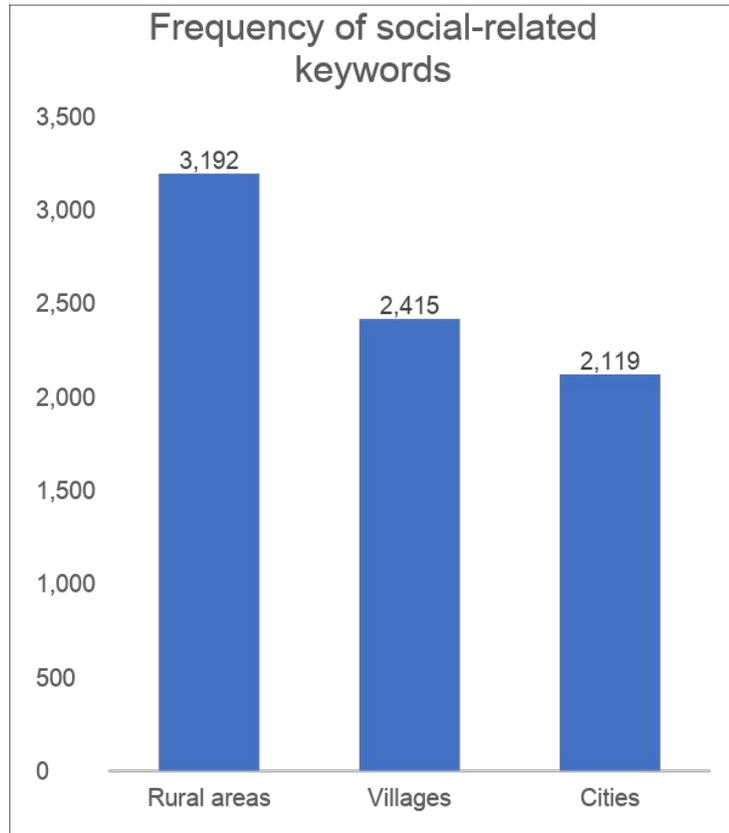
Key findings

- '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



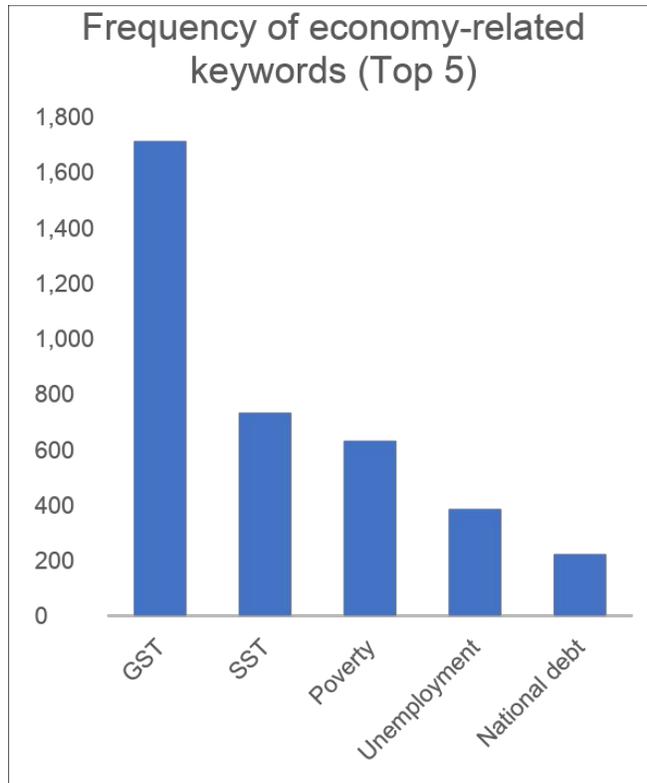
No.	MP name	MP	Frequency
1	Tuan Sivarasa Rasiah	Government	335
2	Datuk Seri Rina binti Mohd Harun	Government	253
3	Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Hassan	Backbencher	249
4	Datuk Seri Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan	Opposition	234
5	Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed	Backbencher	230
6	Tuan Lukanisman bin Awang Sauni	Opposition	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



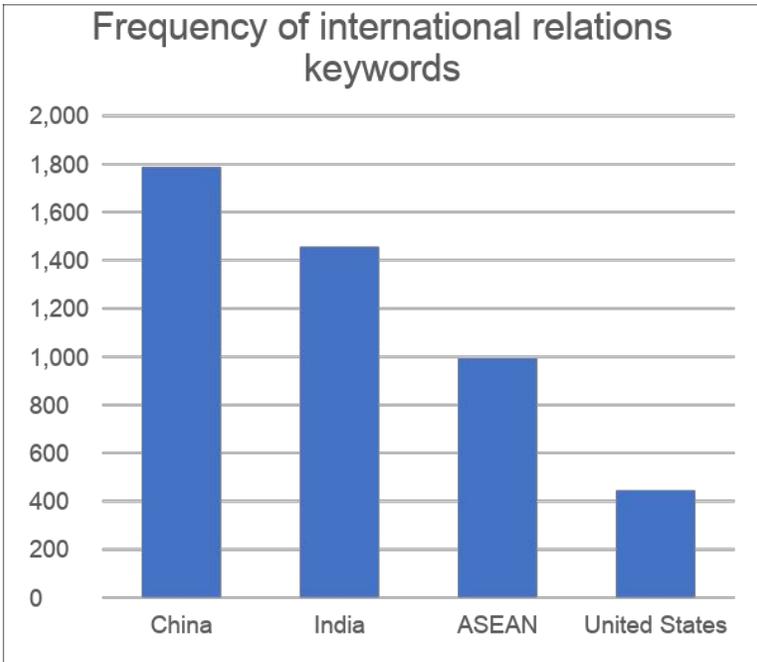
Key findings

- 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