

# 'Watching the Watchdog' Malaysian Media Coverage of GE13

Preliminary Results – Release 1

21/04/13

Dr Tessa J. Houghton  
[School of Modern Languages and Cultures](#)  
[Director of the Centre for the Study of Communications and Culture](#)  
University of Nottingham Malaysian Campus



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

in collaboration with



Comments and feedback welcomed at:

[tessa.houghton@nottingham.edu.my](mailto:tessa.houghton@nottingham.edu.my)  
010 523 4575

or

Masjaliza Hamzah  
Executive Officer  
[Centre for Independent Journalism](#)  
[cijmalaysia@gmail.com](mailto:cijmalaysia@gmail.com)  
016 338 6603



The work is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#)

## Table of Contents

Watching the Watchdog Release 1: Malaysian voters deprived of fair and objective information about political parties in GE13.....	3
1: Media Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions.....	4
1.1 Volume of Coverage of Parties & Coalitions.....	4
Figure 1: Volume of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions.....	4
Figure 2: Volume of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent.....	5
Figures 3-6: .....	5
Volume of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent - Bernama vs. Newspapers vs. Television vs. Online News.....	5
1.2 Tone of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions.....	8
Figure 7: Negative Political Party & Coalition Coverage .....	8
Figure 8: Positive Political Party & Coalition Coverage.....	9
Figure 9: Tone of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent.....	10
Figures 10-13: Tone of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent - Bernama vs. Newspapers vs. Television vs. Online News.....	11
2: Background Information/Methodology.....	13
3: Appendix 1 – Tables.....	15
4: Appendix 2 – Coding Scheme.....	18

# Watching the Watchdog Release 1<sup>1</sup>: Malaysian voters deprived of fair and objective information about political parties in GE13

In scrutinising the GE13 coverage provided by the most popular and influential Malaysian media, the Watching the Watchdog media monitoring project<sup>2</sup> found that citizens of Malaysia are being deprived of fair and objective information about political parties and coalitions which are taking part in the elections.

## Key Results

- The ruling BN coalition and its parties are given the **most** coverage overall, often by a significant margin.
- The ruling BN coalition and its parties are given the **most favourable** coverage overall, often by a significant margin.
- The only news sources which do not conform to the above trends are the online news portals, which give approximately equal quantities and quality of coverage to both BN and PR.
- Newspapers and television news heavily favour BN in terms of both the quantity and quality of coverage devoted to the coalition and its parties.

---

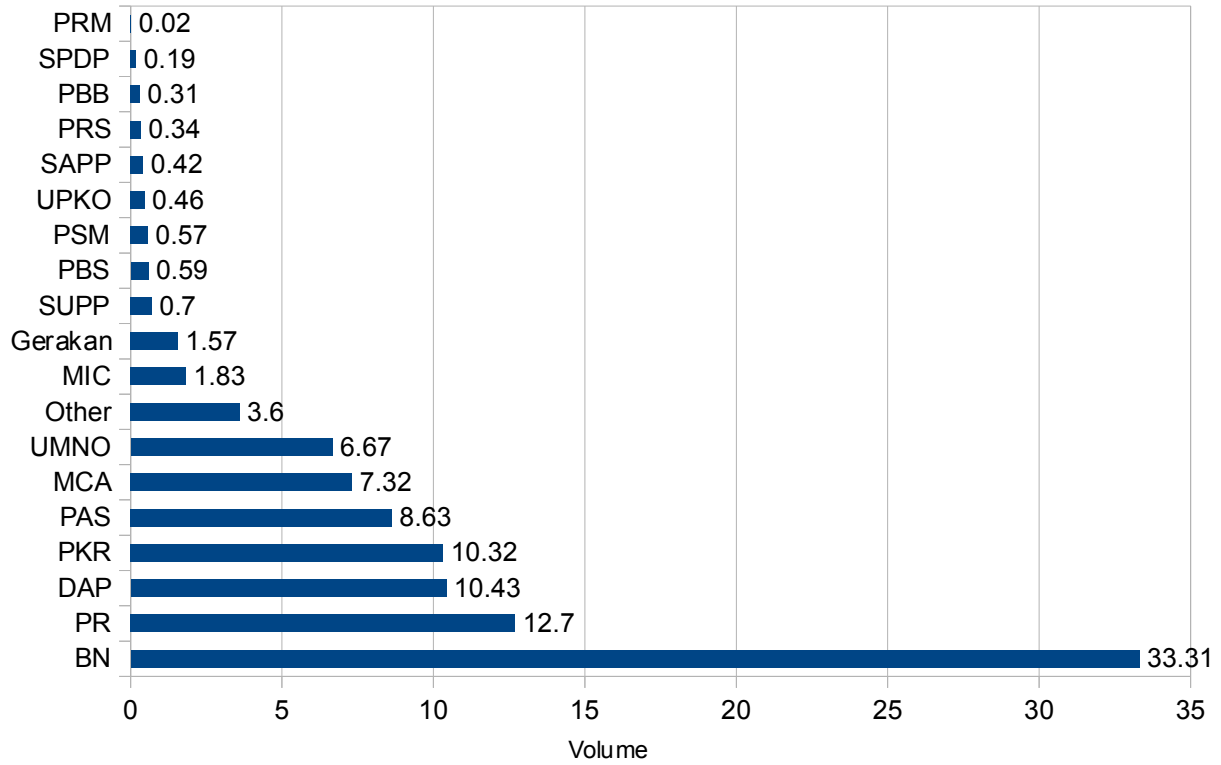
1 Release 1 is focused on political parties and coalition only. It is based on data collected over seven days (7/4/13 – 15/04/13) for 26 media/publications.

2 Watching the Watchdog project monitors coverage from 29 media – newspapers, television news broadcasts, online news sites as well as the national press agency, in four languages (English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin, and Tamil); in Sabah and Sarawak as well as in Peninsular Malaysia, during the month spanning April 7<sup>th</sup> to May 7<sup>th</sup> 2013. It is a collaboration between the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus and the Centre for Independent Journalism.

# 1: Media Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions

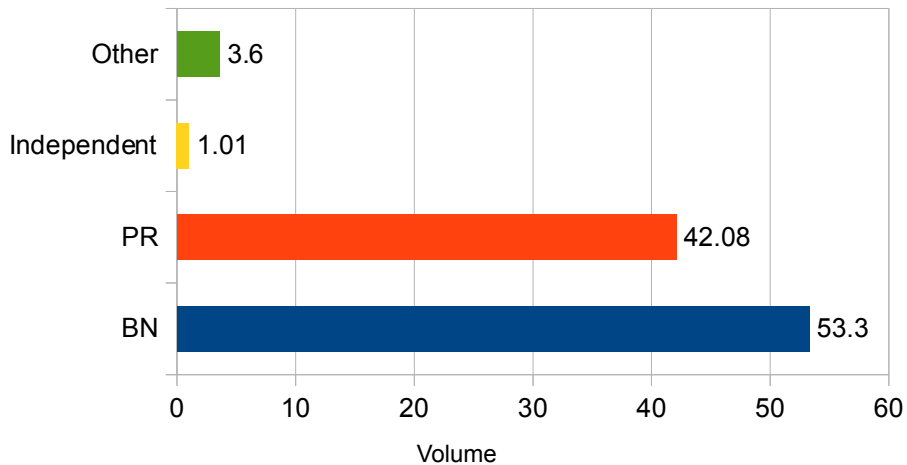
## 1.1 Volume of Coverage of Parties & Coalitions

Figure 1: Volume of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions



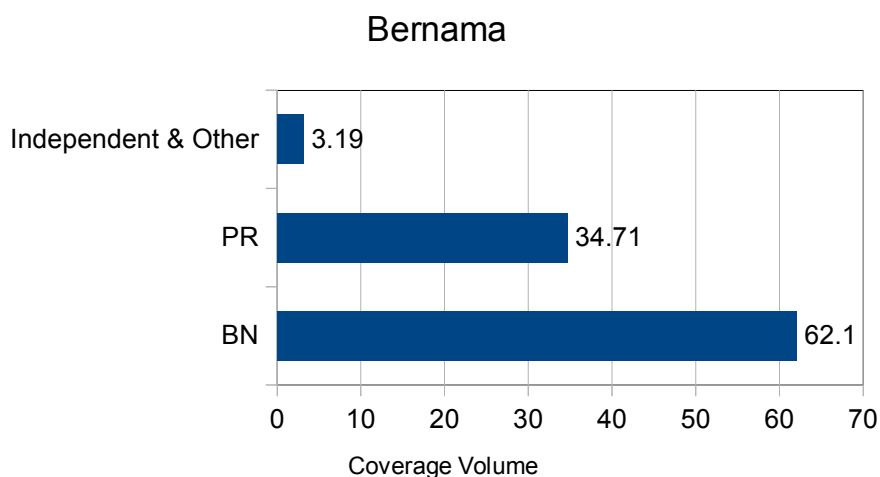
- Across all media and all parties/coalitions, BN receive the most coverage by a significant margin (33.3%), followed by PR (12.7%), then DAP (10.4%) and PKR (10.3%).
- Refer to Table 1 for figures.

Figure 2: Volume of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent



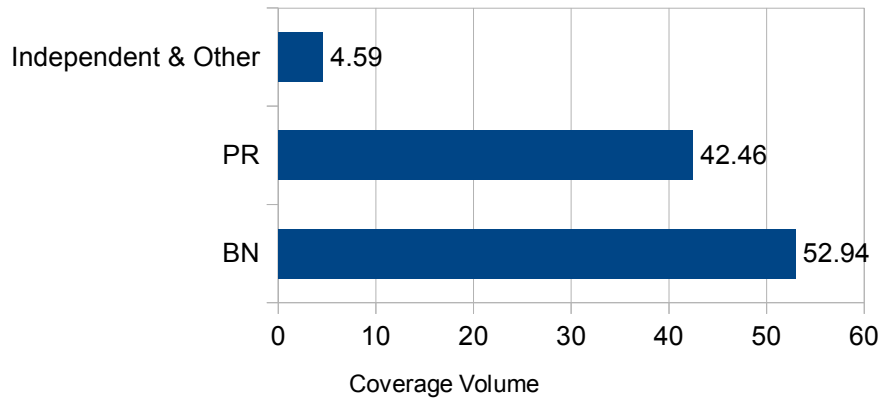
- Once parties/coalitions' coverage volumes are combined, the BN coalition again received the most coverage by a significant margin (53.3%), as opposed to PR (42.1%).
- Refer to Table 2 for figures.

Figures 3-6: Volume of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent - Bernama vs. Newspapers vs. Television vs. Online News



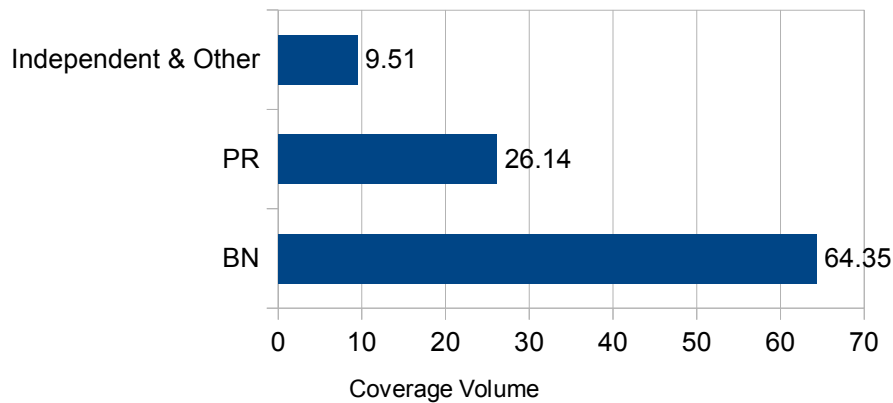
- Bernama gives the most coverage to the BN coalition and its parties (62.1%), followed by the opposition coalition and its parties (34.7%) then independent and other parties (3.19%).
- Refer to Table 3 for figures.

### Newspapers



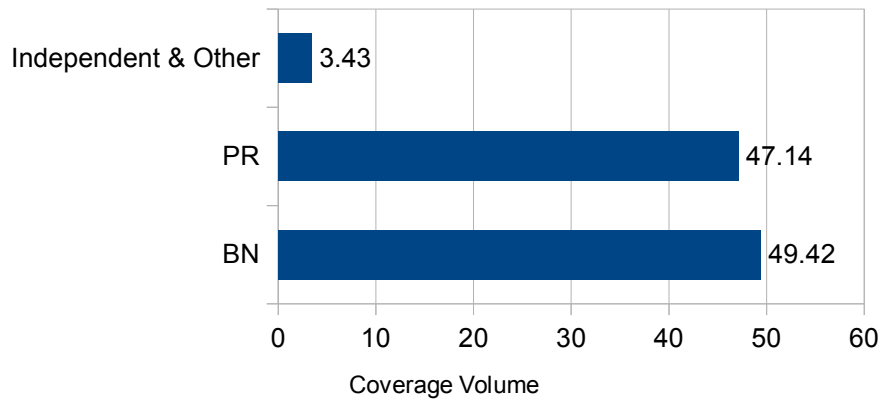
- The newspapers also give the most coverage to the BN coalition and its parties (52.9%), followed by the opposition coalition and its parties (42.5%) then independent and other parties (4.6%)
- Refer to Table 3 for figures.

### Television



- Television also gives the most coverage to the BN coalition and its parties by a significant margin (64.35%), compared to that given to PR and its parties (26.1%) and independent and other parties (9.5%).
- Refer to Table 3 for figures.

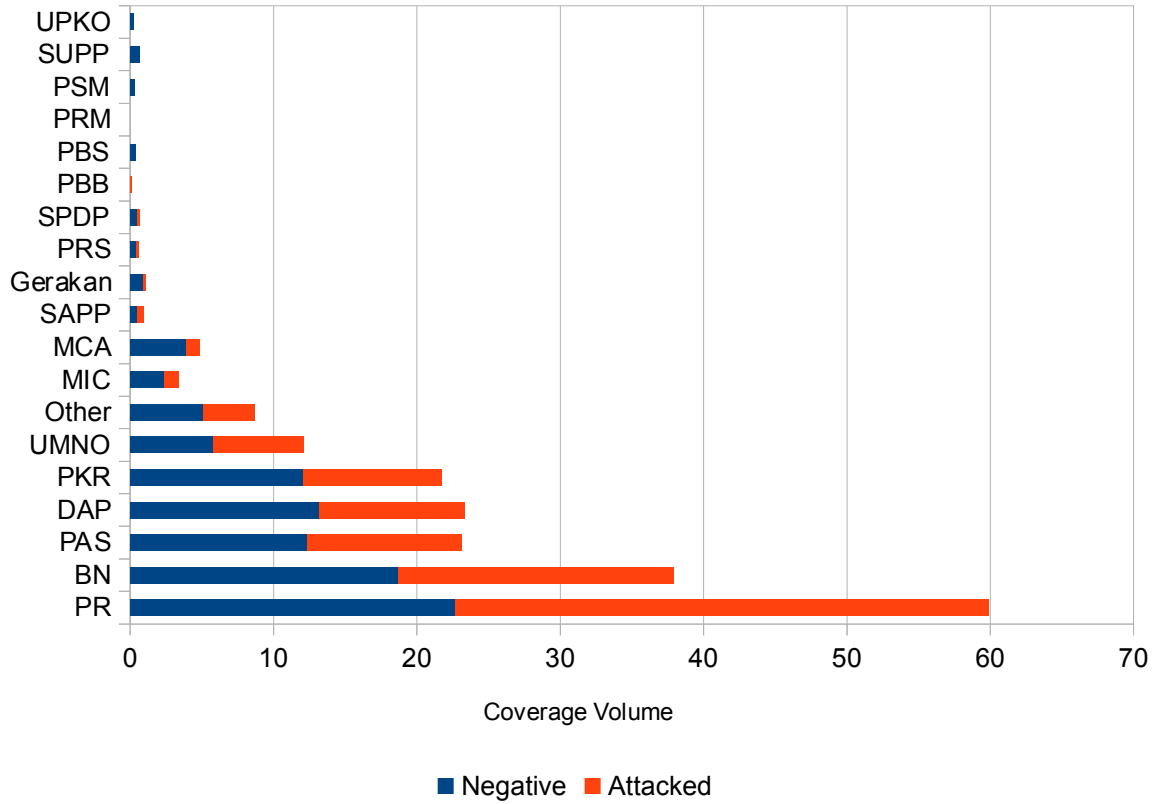
## Online



- The online media give relatively equal coverage to both major coalitions, with BN and PR and their parties at 49.42% and 47.14% respectively.
- Refer to Table 3 for figures.

## 1.2 Tone of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions

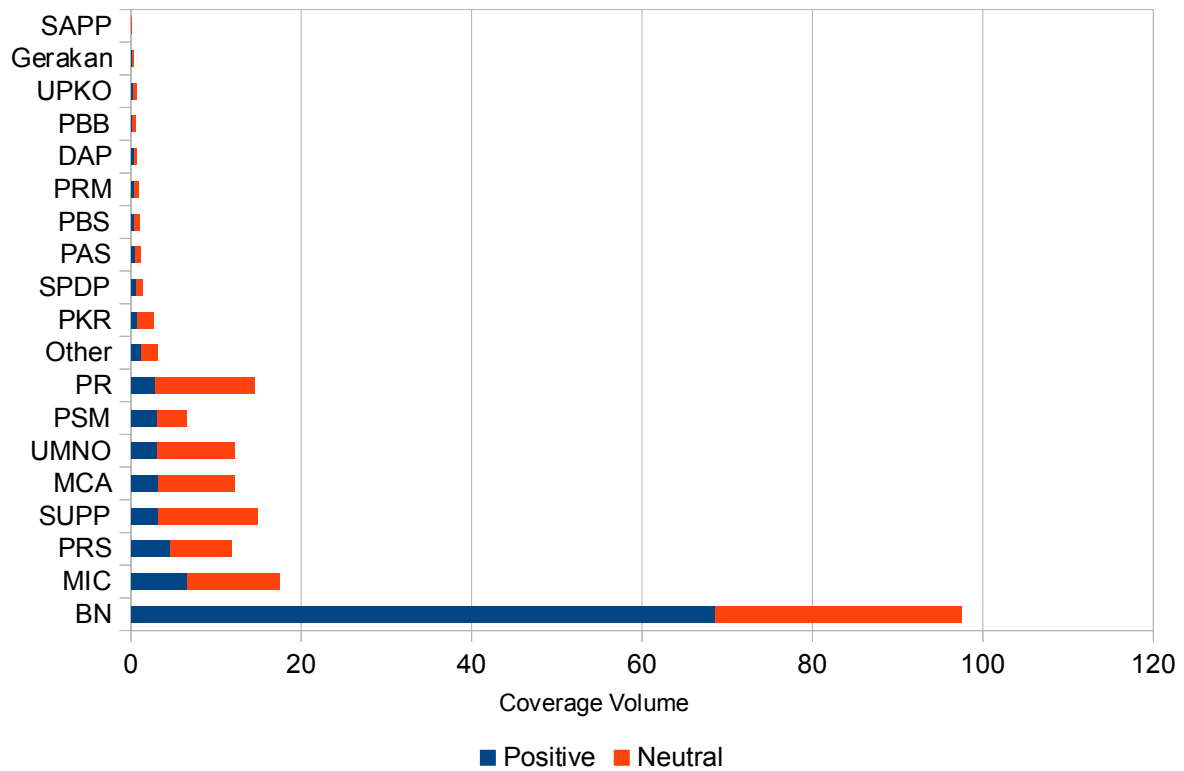
Figure 7: Negative Political Party & Coalition Coverage



- PR is the most negatively covered (22.64%) and attacked (37.26%) party/coalition by a significant margin.
- BN comes in second, with 18.7% and 19.2% in each category.
- However, it should be noted that the most attacked parties in position 3-5 are the opposition coalition's constituent parties – see Figure 9 for combined coverage.
- Refer to Table 4 for figures.

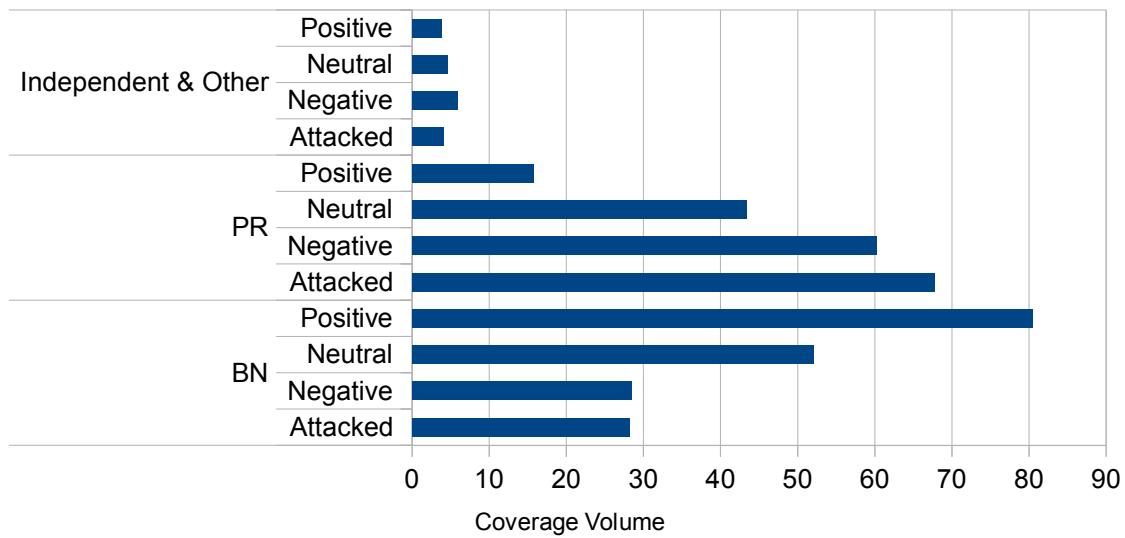


Figure 8: Positive Political Party & Coalition Coverage



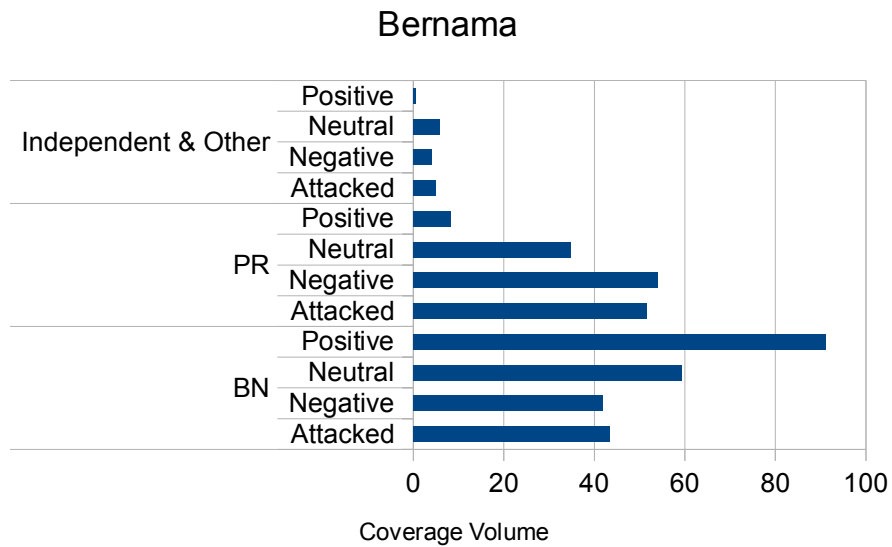
- BN receive the most positive (68.5%) and neutral (29%) coverage by a significant margin, with the opposition coalition/parties receiving very little positive coverage at all.
- Refer to Table 4 for figures.

Figure 9: Tone of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent & Other

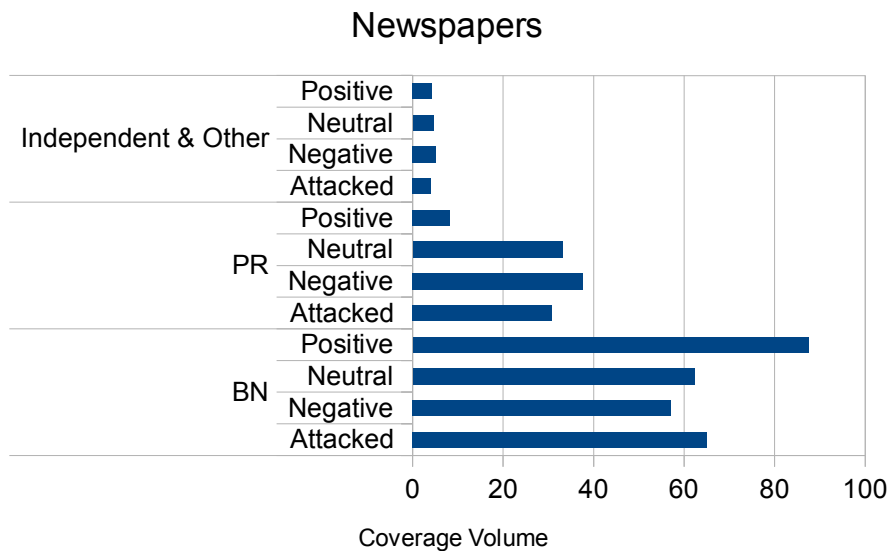


- This figure and the following four are weighted according to tone, where each tonal category is split into weighted proportions given to each coalition.
- When coalition and party coverage is combined into the two opposing coalitions, it becomes very clear that BN receives the most positive and neutrally toned coverage (proportionally).
- In contrast, PR receives the most negative coverage and attacks (proportionally).
- Refer to Table 5 for figures.

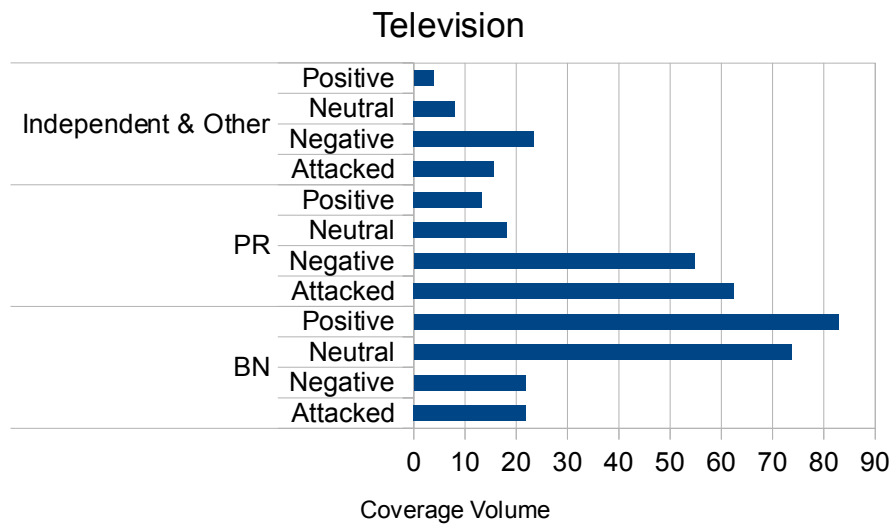
Figures 10-13: Tone of Coverage of Political Parties & Coalitions: Government vs. Opposition vs. Independent & Other - Bernama vs. Newspapers vs. Television vs. Online News



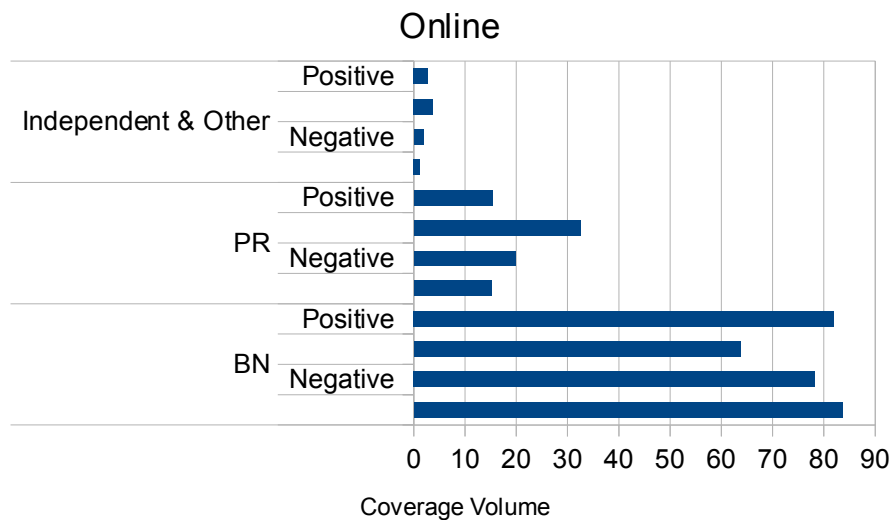
- Bernama echoes the overall trend of giving the BN coalition the most positive and neutral coverage, with PR receiving the most negative coverage and attacks (proportionally).
- Refer to Tables 6 for figures.



- The newspapers also echo the overall trend of giving the BN coalition the most positive and neutral coverage (proportionally).
- However, they also give BN the most negative coverage and attacks (proportionally).
- Refer to Tables 6 for figures.



- Television coverage also echoes the general trend of giving the BN coalition the most positive and neutral coverage, with the lack of negative coverage given to BN and the large amount given to PR (proportionally) especially pronounced in this medium.
- Refer to Table 6 for figures.



- The online media give BN the most coverage within each tonal category (proportionally).
- When viewed alongside Figure 6, this tells us that the neutral tonal category is by far the largest category used in the online media, i.e. they are the most even-handed in their coverage of political parties and coalitions of the four media types analysed.
- Refer to Table 6 for figures.

## 2: Background Information/Methodology

Media/Publications Analysed (n = 29 – 3\* = 26) in Release 1:

Media Types/ Languages	Newspapers	Television Broadcasts	Online Media	News Wire/Agency
<b>English</b>	New Straits Times	TV2 English News	Malaysiakini English	Bernama English
	The Star			
	The Sun			
	Daily Express (Sabah)	NTV7 Edition 7	Malaysian Insider English	
	Borneo Post (Sarawak)			
<b>Bahasa Malaysia</b>	Utusan	TV1 Berita Nasional	Malaysiakini Bahasa Malaysia	Bernama Bahasa Malaysia (7/4/13 – 10/4/13 only)
	Sinar Harian			
	Harian Metro			
	Utusan Borneo (Sabah)	TV3 Buletin Utama	Malaysia Insider Bahasa Malaysia	
	Utusan Borneo (Sarawak)			
<b>Mandarin</b>	Sin Chew Jit Poh	TV2 Berita Mandarin	<i>*Data for these publications is not included within this report due to resourcing issues, but will be included in later iterations.</i>	
	Oriental Daily			
	China Press			
	See Hua Daily (Sabah)	8TV Mandarin News		
	See Hua Daily (Sarawak)			
<b>Tamil</b>	Makkal Osai			
	Malaysian Nanban*			

Number of data points/references identified and analysed: n = 79015

Number of articles identified and analysed: n = 15791

### Data Collection

Our data collection is done by 70 monitors who were trained using the methodology below under the supervision of 8 team leaders. The coders – many of whom are university students – are based in Klang Valley, Penang, Kota Kinabalu, and Kuching. The team leaders are made up of academics, researchers and students.

The data was collected or 'coded' using sentence-level content analysis.

Stories 'coded' were selected according to the following criteria:

- They were within the Malaysian news section/s of the newspapers including the front page, or were the paper's editorial (if they run one).

- They were from pre-defined 'Malaysian News' areas of the news websites monitored, with 'snapshots' taken at 8pm daily.
- They were from within the TV news broadcasts.
- They were more than 1/3 about the election, and were news stories as opposed to columns, opinions pieces, letters, etc (with the exception of the paper's own editorial, if present).

Within each story, category/operator references were identified and coded at the sentence level (from period to period). The 21 categories identified and their sub-categories or 'operators' are outlined in Appendix 2. These 21 categories form the 'unit of analysis' for this study.

Tone (positive, negative, neutral, attacking, or attacked) was determined based on matching each reference to a media frame or frames, supportable via emotive/descriptive/subjective language/vocabulary utilised by either the news personnel or the source being quoted/paraphrased. As such, tone is not based upon coder opinion but on linguistic data. Coders were instructed to 'code as neutral' whenever there was a lack of linguistic data to support a positive/negative/attacking/attacked frame, or whenever they were unsure/conflicted.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using the open source software package [GNU Octave](#) (a multi-disciplinary mathematical data analysis programme capable of SPSS/NVIVO-level statistical analysis, as well as much higher-level mathematical analysis). Scripts were composed to count occurrences of key data-codes, as specified by the project's finite code-listing set (see Appendix 2), for every row of coded data (i.e. every reference). Where appropriate, code-count occurrences have been normalised to provide the percentage of these key-code occurrences.

### 3: Appendix 1 – Tables

TABLE 1	
Party	Percentage
BN	33.313
DAP	10.428
Gerakan	1.5723
MCA	7.3215
MIC	1.8304
PAS	8.631
PBB	0.30506
PBS	0.59135
PKR	10.321
PR	12.7
PRS	0.34261
PRM	0.023466
PSM	0.57258
SAPP	0.4177
SPDP	0.18773
SUPP	0.70399
UMNO	6.6692
UPKO	0.46464

TABLE 2					
Party	Percentage	Coalition	Percentage		
BN	33.313	<b>BN</b>	53.30178		
Gerakan	1.5723				
MCA	7.3215				
MIC	1.8304				
PBB	0.30506				
PBS	0.59135				
PRS	0.34261				
SPDP	0.18773				
SUPP	0.70399				
UMNO	6.6692				
UPKO	0.46464				
PR	12.7			<b>PR</b>	42.08
DAP	10.428				
PAS	8.631				
PKR	10.321				
PRM	0.023466	<b>Independent</b>	1.013746		
PSM	0.57258				
SAPP	0.4177				

TABLE 3		
Publication Type	Coalition	Percentages
Bernama	BN	62.10119
	PR	34.7073
	Independent & Other	3.1948
Newspapers	BN	52.94262
	PR	42.4619
	Independent & Other	4.594762
Television	BN	64.348598
	PR	26.1444
	Independent & Other	9.50702
Online	BN	49.422568
	PR	47.1439
	Independent & Other	3.433352

TABLE 4				
Parties & Coalitions	Attacked	Negative	Neutral	Positive
BN	19.227	18.721	29.002	68.525
DAP	10.12	13.191	11.655	2.8525
Gerakan	0.18399	0.92166	1.9348	0.77796
MCA	0.91996	3.9171	9.0267	3.1442
MIC	1.012	2.3618	1.9612	1.1994
PAS	10.764	12.327	9.1521	3.1118
PBB	0.091996	0	0.34997	0.32415
PBS	0	0.34562	0.69334	0.45381
PKR	9.6596	12.097	11.655	3.2739
PR	37.259	22.638	10.915	6.5478
PRS	0.18399	0.40323	0.37639	0.2269
PRM	0	0	0.01981	0.06483
PSM	0	0.28802	0.69334	0.38898
SAPP	0.45998	0.51843	0.42261	0.2269
SPDP	0.18399	0.51843	0.15188	0.19449
SUPP	0	0.63364	0.799	0.55105
UMNO	6.3477	5.7604	7.2042	4.6353
UPKO	0	0.23041	0.54807	0.38898
Other	3.5879	5.1267	3.4403	3.1118

TABLE 5 WEIGHTED SUMMARY		
BN	Attacked	28.150626
	Negative	28.475056
	Neutral	52.04755
	Positive	80.42124
PR	Attacked	67.8026
	Negative	60.253
	Neutral	43.3771
	Positive	15.786
Independent & Other	Attacked	4.04788
	Negative	5.93315
	Neutral	4.57606
	Positive	3.79251



TABLE 6 WEIGHTED SUMMARY			
Bernama	BN	Attacked	43.3337
		Negative	41.8367
		Neutral	59.3361
		Positive	91.11804
	PR	Attacked	51.666
		Negative	54.081
		Neutral	34.855
		Positive	8.2237
	Independent & Other	Attacked	5
		Negative	4.0816
		Neutral	5.80914
		Positive	0.65789
Newspapers	BN	Attacked	65.06075
		Negative	57.14265
		Neutral	62.31337
		Positive	87.47747
	PR	Attacked	30.8436
		Negative	37.69
		Neutral	33.1069
		Positive	8.229
	Independent & Other	Attacked	4.09641
		Negative	5.16713
		Neutral	4.579951
		Positive	4.293405
Television	BN	Attacked	21.875
		Negative	21.7386
		Neutral	73.7678
		Positive	82.87317
	PR	Attacked	62.5
		Negative	54.782
		Neutral	18.1337
		Positive	13.2597
	Independent & Other	Attacked	15.625
		Negative	23.478
		Neutral	8.09861
		Positive	3.86739
Online	BN	Attacked	83.63552
		Negative	78.26048
		Neutral	63.719237
		Positive	81.96815
	PR	Attacked	15.1514
		Negative	19.8067
		Neutral	32.521
		Positive	15.3005
	Independent & Other	Attacked	1.2121
		Negative	1.9324
		Neutral	3.760519
		Positive	2.73225

## 4: Appendix 2 – Coding Scheme

### 1. Politician or Political Figure (Mentioned)

1. Abdul Rahman Dalan
2. Alfred Jabu
3. Ambiga Sreenevasan
4. Anwar Ibrahim
5. Azmin Ali
6. Baru Bian
7. Bernard Dompok
8. Chong Chieng Jen
9. Chua Soi Lek
10. Dzulkefly Ahmad
11. Elizabeth Wong
12. G. Palanivel
13. Hadi Awang
14. Hassan Ali
15. Hishamuddin Hussein
16. James Masing
17. Jeffrey Kitingan
18. Karpal Singh
19. Khalid Ibrahim
20. Khalid Samad
21. Lim Guan Eng
22. Lim Kit Siang
23. Liow Tiong Lai
24. Mahathir Mohamad
25. Maximus Ongkili
26. Mohamad 'Mat' Sabu
27. Muhyiddin Yassin
28. Musa Aman
29. Najib Razak
30. Ng Yen Yen
31. Nik Aziz
32. Nizar Jamaluddin
33. Nurul Izzah
34. Rafizi Ramli
35. Rosmah Mansur
36. Siti Mariah Mahmud
37. Taib Mahmud
38. Teresa Kok
39. Tian Chua
40. Tony Pua
41. William Mawan
42. Wong Ho Leng
43. Wong Soon Koh
44. Yong Teck Lee

### 2. Politicians or Political Figure (Used as a Source)

1. Ambiga Sreenevasan (Bersih)
2. Anwar Ibrahim (PKR)
3. Baru Bian
4. Chua Soi Lek
5. Hadi Awang
6. Hassan Ali
7. Jeffrey Kitingan
8. Khalid Ibrahim

9. Lim Guan Eng
10. Lim Kit Siang
11. Mahathir Mohamad
12. Muhyiddin Yassin
13. Musa Aman
14. Najib Razak
15. Nazri Aziz
16. Nik Aziz
17. Taib Mahmud
18. Vox Pop Male
19. Vox Pop Female
20. Public Opinion/Vox Pop General
21. Election Commission Spokesperson

### 3. Party or Coalition

1. BN (Barisan Nasional)
2. DAP (Democratic Action Party)
3. Gerakan (Malaysian People's Movement Party)
4. MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association)
5. MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress)
6. PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party)
7. PBB (Parti Besaka Bumputera Bersatu)
8. PBS (Parti Bersatu Sabah)
9. PKR (People's Justice Party)
10. PR (Pakatan Rakyat)
11. PRS (Sarawak People's Party)
12. PRM (Parti Rakyat Malaysia)
13. PSM (Parti Sosialis Malaysia)
14. SAPP (Sabah Progressive Party)
15. SPDP (Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party)
16. SUPP (Sarawak United People's Party)
17. UMNO (United Malays National Organisation)
18. UPKO (United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation)

### 4. Organisations

1. Bersih
2. Community-based organisations.
3. Democracy- or human rights-oriented organisations (excluding Bersih)
4. Environmentally-oriented organisations
5. Ethnicity-oriented organisations
6. JATI
7. Perkasa
8. Professionals organisations
9. Religious organisations.
10. Trade Unions
11. Womens' rights or issues focused organisations.
12. Youth or student focused organisations
13. Election Commission

### 5. Policy Issues

1. Vision Policies or Programmes

1. 1 Malaysia
  2. GTP (Government Transformation Programme)
  3. ETP (Economic Transformation Programme)
  4. NKRA (National Key Results Areas)
  5. NEP/'Bumiputeraism'
  6. PAS's Welfare State
  7. PKR's Buku Jingga
  8. NEM (New Economic Model)
  9. 'Transformasi'
  10. BN Manifesto
  11. PR Manifesto
  12. Other
2. Environment
    1. Deforestation/Land Rights
    2. Recycling
    3. Lynas
    4. Polluting Industries (non-Lynas)
    5. Damming Projects
    6. Other
  3. Economy/Development
    1. Recession
    2. Welfare
    3. Unemployment
    4. Poverty
    5. Privatisation
    6. Growth/FDI
    7. FTA/Globalisation
    8. Inflation/Price Rises
    9. Infrastructure
    10. Housing
    11. Other
  4. Education
    1. Vernacular Schools
    2. Access
    3. PPSMI
    4. Academic Freedom
    5. System
    6. PTPTN
    7. Other
  5. Foreign Policy
    1. Western World
    2. Singapore (Mentions of)
    3. Singapore (Comparison with)
    4. China
    5. India
    6. Islamic World
    7. Israel/Palestine
    8. Indonesia
    9. Other
  6. Domestic Policy, Crime, & National Security
    1. Immigration
    2. Illegals/Refugees
    3. Terrorism (not Lahad Datu)
    4. Crime
    5. Lahad Datu Incident
    6. Other
  7. Oppressive Legislation
    1. ISA (Internal Security Act)
    2. AUKU/UUCA (Universities and University Colleges Act 1971)
    3. Sedition Act
    4. PPPA (Printing Presses and Publication Act)
    5. PAA (Peaceful Assembly Act 2012)
    6. SOSMA (Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012)
    7. Other
  8. Health
    1. 1Care
    2. Other
  9. Religion
    1. Apostasy
    2. Islamic State
    3. Hudud
    4. Conversion (into Islam)
    5. 'Allah' issue
    6. Other
  6. Non-Policy Issues
    1. Ethnicity
      1. Malaysia
      2. Chinese
      3. Indian/South Asian
      4. Orang Asli
      5. Orang Asal, Sabah & Sarawak
      6. Thai
      7. Portuguese/Eurasian
      8. Malay Rights
      9. Other
    2. Religion
      1. Islam
      2. Buddhism/Taoism
      3. Hinduism
      4. Christianity
      5. Sikhism
      6. Religious Freedom (non-apostasy related)
      7. Interfaith Dialogue/Unity
      8. Interfaith Friction
      9. Other
    3. Democracy & Human Rights
      1. General Corruption
      2. Electoral Corruption
      3. Media Freedom
      4. Electoral Reform
      5. Electoral Legislation
      6. 2-Party System
      7. Protest/Rallies
      8. Other
    4. Socioeconomic Sectors
      1. Middle Class/Professionals
      2. Working Class
      3. Aristocracy/Monarchy
      4. Civil Service
      5. Military and Police
      6. FELDA
      7. Plantation/Estate Workers

- 8. Chine New Villagers
  - 9. Senior Citizens/Retirees
  - 10. RELA/Wataniah
  - 11. Urban
  - 12. Rural
  - 13. Cost of Living
  - 14. Other
5. Territory
- 1. Kuala Lumpur
  - 2. Labuan
  - 3. Putrajaya
  - 4. Johor
  - 5. Kedah
  - 6. Kelantan
  - 7. Malacca
  - 8. Negeri Sembilan
  - 9. Pahang
  - 10. Perak
  - 11. Perlis
  - 12. Penang
  - 13. Sabah
  - 14. Sarawak
  - 15. Selangor
  - 16. Terengganu
  - 17. Sarawak Independence
  - 18. Sabah Independence
6. Mudslinging
- 1. Anwar/Sodomy
  - 2. Altantuya
  - 3. Rosmah
  - 4. Penang CM
  - 5. Selangor CM
  - 6. NFC
  - 7. Arms Deals
  - 8. Psy/CNY Concert
- 9. Project IC
  - 10. Taib Mahmud and Logging Expose
  - 11. Other
7. Gender
- 1. Sexuality
  - 2. Women in politics
  - 3. Personal/Private life
  - 4. Womens' Issues
  - 5. LGBT/Q
  - 6. Appearance
  - 7. Sexism
  - 8. Other
8. Electioneering
- 1. Event-specific Gifts
  - 2. Handouts
  - 3. Timely Developments
  - 4. Election Promises
  - 5. Baby-kissing
  - 6. Cybertroopers/Social Media War
  - 7. Other