

**RASED's preliminary report on the passage of Jordan's
2015 budget laws in the House of Representatives**

Executive Summary

Issued by

The RASED Program for Parliamentary Accountability

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RASED has released its preliminary report on the performance of Jordan's House of Representatives discussing and voting on Jordan's General Budget and the Budget for Government Agencies for Fiscal Year 2015. RASED monitored discussions on the budget in the Finance Committee and the House and carefully documented the 36 amendments suggested by the Finance Committee and the 791 amendments suggested by individual MPs, none of which were incorporated into the government's final draft of the law.

RASED observed that the final vote on the budget in the House was conducted in a chaotic manner that lacked integrity and transparency. RASED's final report will contain more details about the final vote.

Performance of the Finance Committee:

After receiving the draft law from the government, the Finance Committee held (48) budget discussion meetings by RASED's count, although the committee reported (65) sessions, counting each discussion with a different government body as a distinct meeting. The committee included (5) of the (8) parliamentary blocs as well as independents. Attendance of committee members varied widely, from the Chairman, who attended (100%) of sessions, to a committee member who attended just (1) meeting. At the same time, (55) of the MPs from outside of the committee attended meetings to observe discussions. In negotiations with the government, the committee was successful at reducing expenditures in the budget in order to lower the deficit by JOD (220) million, an unprecedented move for the committee.

During its discussion meetings on the draft laws, the committee produced (36) suggested amendments, which it submitted a report to the government on February 17, 2015. The government did not make changes to the draft law in response to the committee's (36) recommendations.

Discussion in the House of Representatives:

After the government returned the two draft budget laws to the House, 4 days of discussion were held from February 22nd - 25th. During the discussion, (110 of 149) representatives spoke (a total of 74%), and all 8 blocs issues shared statements. A number of times during the sessions, the parliament lost its quorum due to MP absences, but discussions continued regardless. In the MPs' statements, only (58%) of MPs mentioned specific components of the budget. (69%) of MPs mentioned the need for addressing poverty and unemployment, while (35%) talked about raising the price of electricity. Other topics mentioned by MPs included fighting terrorism and extremism (36%), raising the salaries of security forces (26%), strengthening the education sector (40%), supporting agriculture (22%), reducing redundancy in government agencies (15%), supporting women's representation (5%), and enhancing decentralization (2%). No MPs mentioned the upcoming electoral reform.

Overall, MPs made a total of (791) requests for budget allocations. (51%) of MPs spoke about budget requests specific to their regions for a total of (485) allocation requests, while (55%) of MPs had requests applicable to the entire country for a total of (306)



allocations requests. (155) requests by MPs dealt with financial and administrative policies, (23) dealt with education, and (29) dealt with energy policy.

After undertaking comprehensive fact-checking of MPs' statements, RASED revealed that (29%) of the numbers cited by MPs in their statements about the budget were not correct.

In MPs' statements to the government, RASED was able to distinguish (38) distinct topical areas addressed. In its response to the parliament, the government responded to (20) of these topics, leaving (47%) of the issues unanswered. In addition, the government omitted any mention of the Anti-Corruption Commission or the controversial issues of nepotism and favoritism in its response. The government did not make changes to the draft budget law in response to the MPs' statements.

Blocs:

Overall, the (8) blocs in parliament did not exhibit strong cohesion within their ranks. With the exception of the Mubadira bloc which had (100%) of its members voting according to the bloc's stance, other blocs had low levels of member cohesion. The Wafat al Mustaqil bloc had (42%) adherence among its members, while the Al Islah bloc had (36%), Tamkeen (14%), Al Nahda (19%), and Al Watan, only (7%). In the blocs' statements, (4) talked about reducing corruption, (2) talked about decentralization and only (1) mentioned supporting women's inclusion.

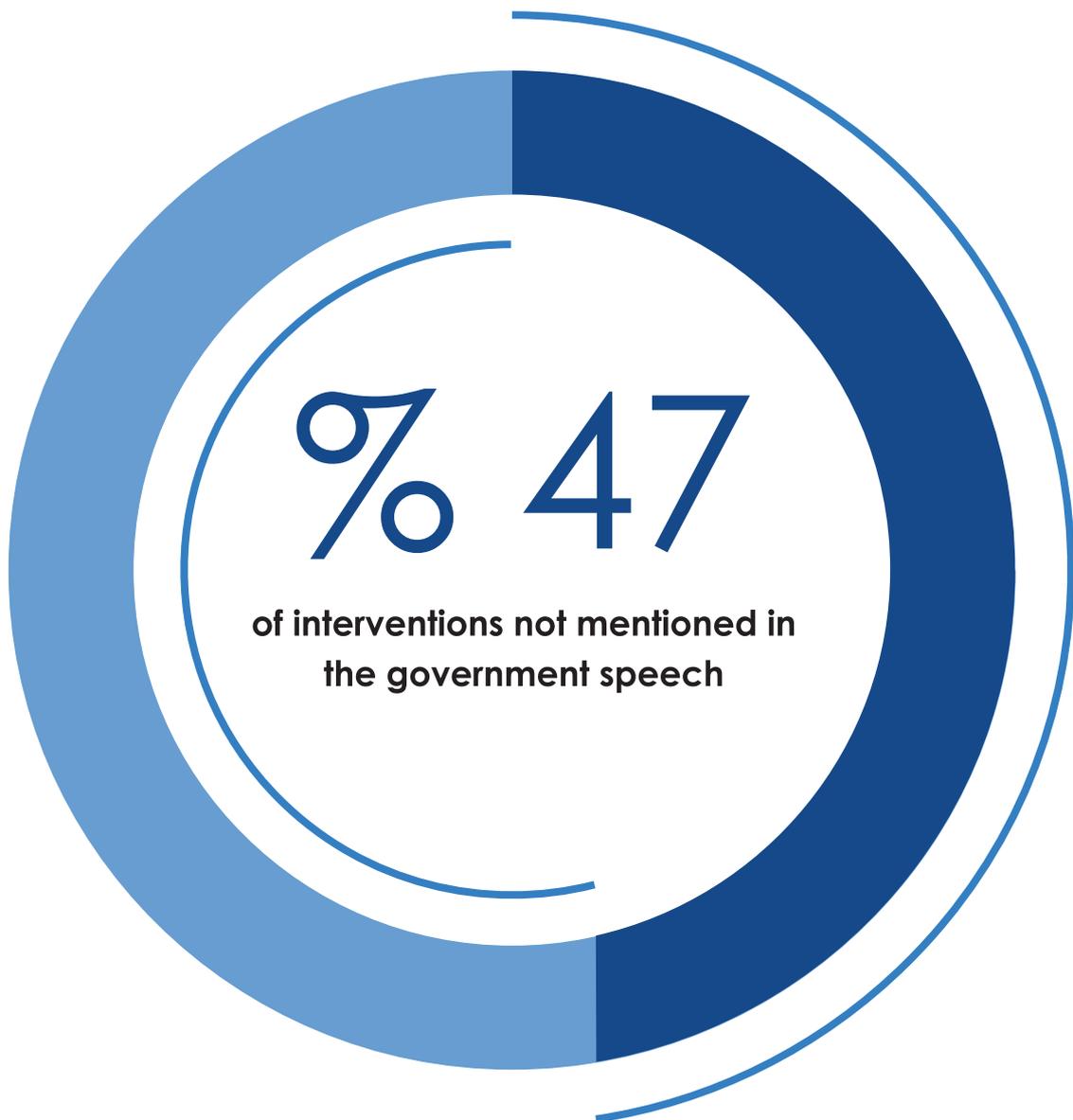
The Voting Period:

The vote on the final budget was conducted in a chaotic way that seriously compromised the transparency and integrity of the vote. The House did not use its electronic voting system but instead had members raise hands to show their votes. As MPs voted on the budget line by line as well as in its entirety, a number of votes succeeded each other in rapid succession, making it difficult to count or document the number of hands raised before the House moved to the subsequent vote. RASED is currently reviewing its video and photo records to attempt to verify the vote results produced by the House, and will include details in its forthcoming final report.

The following figures show visualizations of the statistics cited in this report:

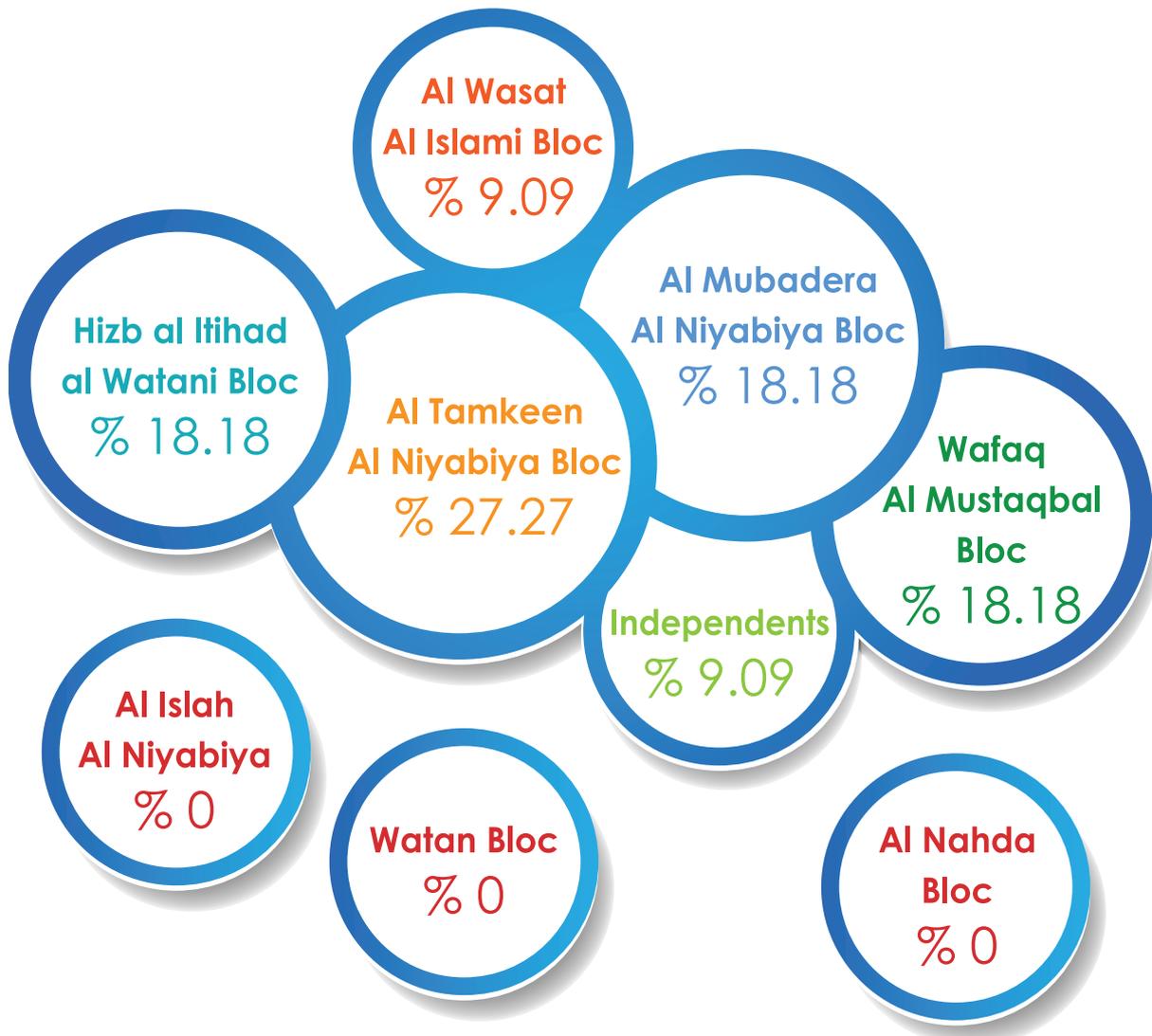


Percentage of indicators included in MP interventions which the government did not respond to in its speech upon conclusion of the Draft Budget Law discussions of 2015



Graph 1 presents the percentage of indicators included in MP interventions which the government did not respond to in its speech upon conclusion of the Draft Budget Law discussions of 2015

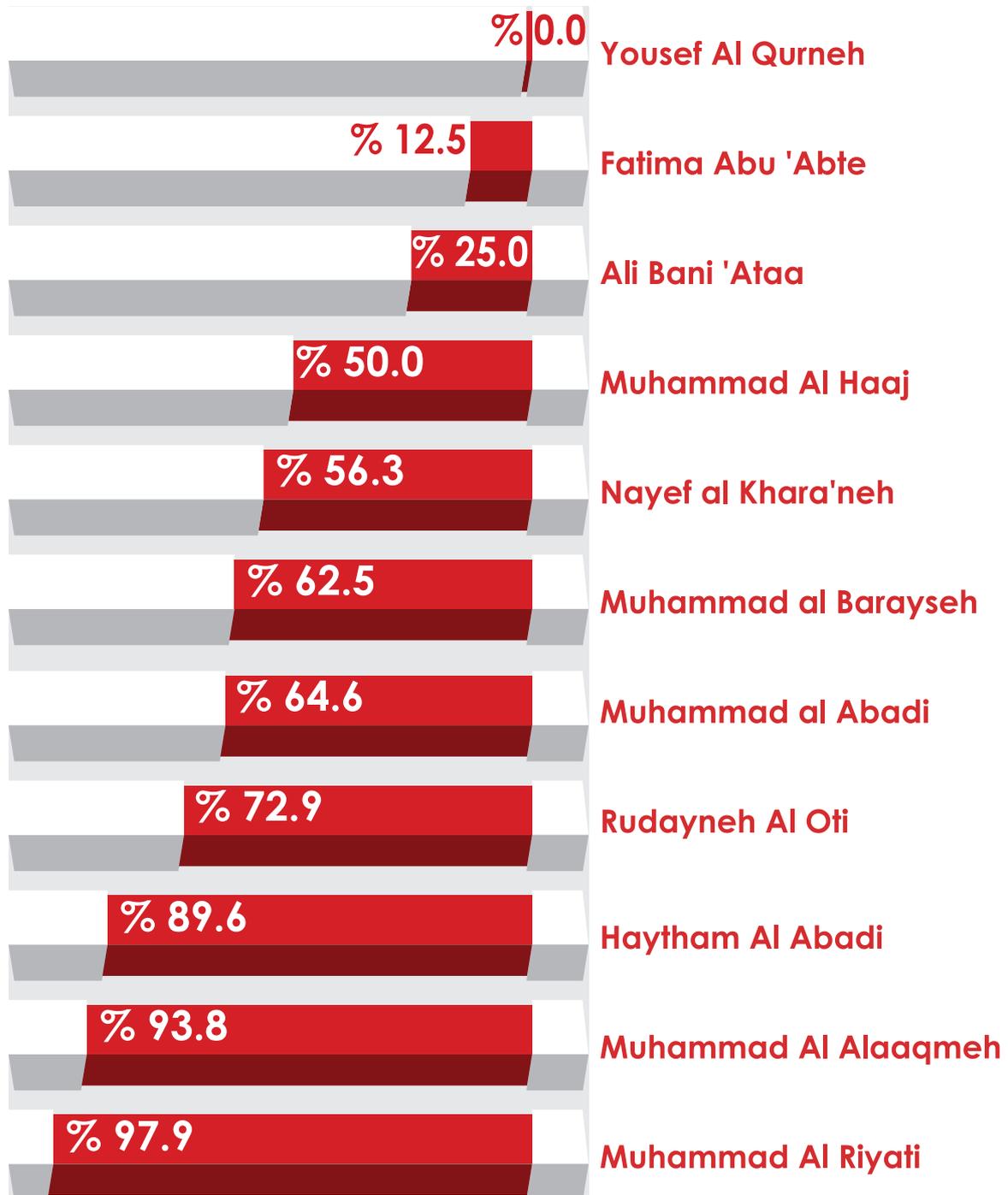
Composition of the Financial Committee during the Second Ordinary Session of the Parliament



Graph 2 portrays the composition of the Financial Committee during the Second Ordinary Session of the Parliament

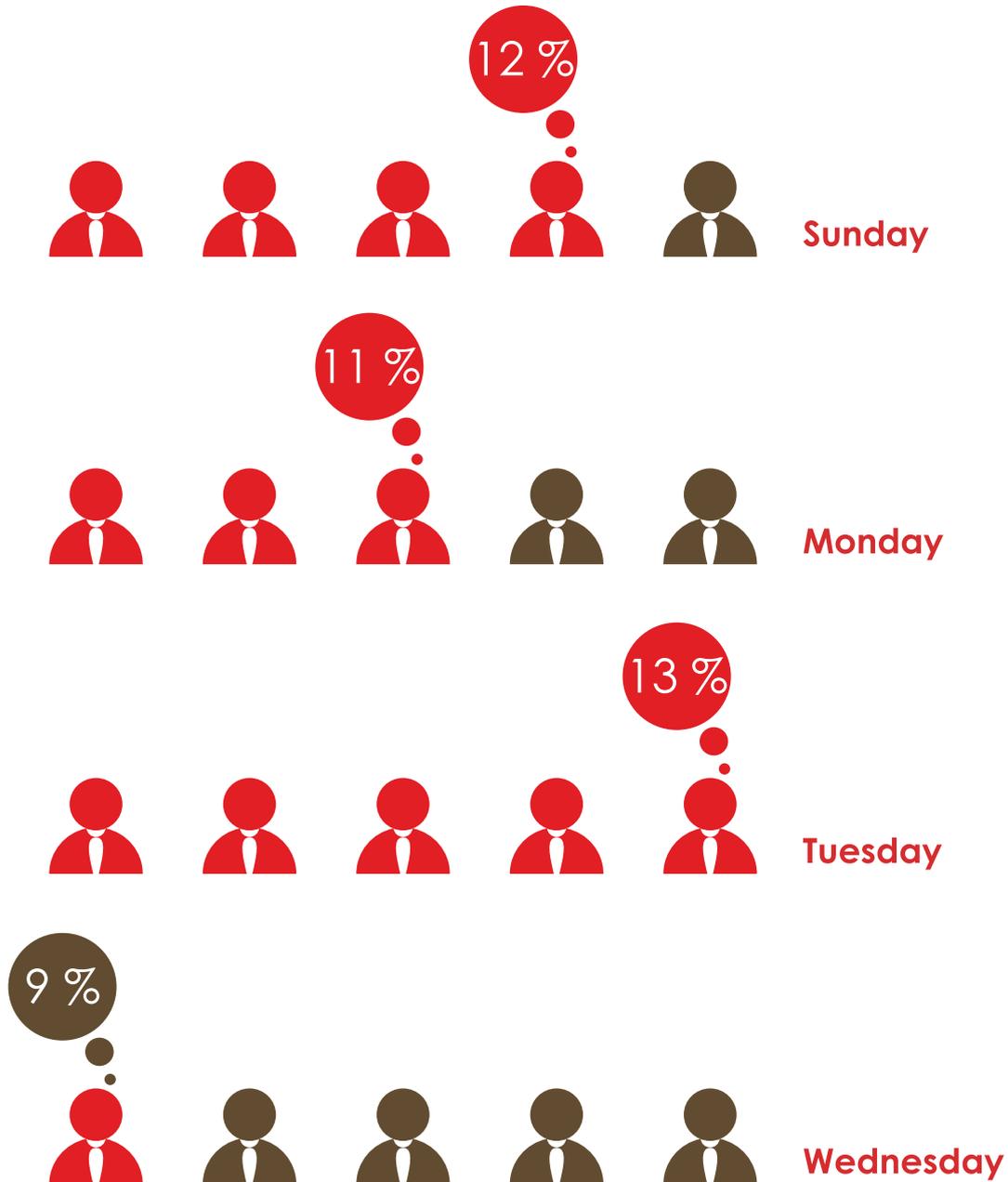


Absences of Financial Committee Members in Committee Meetings During the Budget Discussions



Graph 3 presents the percentage of Committee member absences from its meetings during the 48 meetings taking place during the Budget Discussion period from 30/11/2014 - 10/2/2015

Percentage of MP Attendance upon commencement of each Draft Budget Law Discussion Session in 2015



Note that this percentage does not represent average overall MP attendance during the discussion sessions due to the fact that the quorum was not fulfilled, yet sessions were conducted nonetheless

Graph 4 presents the percentage of MP attendance upon commencement of each discussion session of the Draft Budget Law of 2015

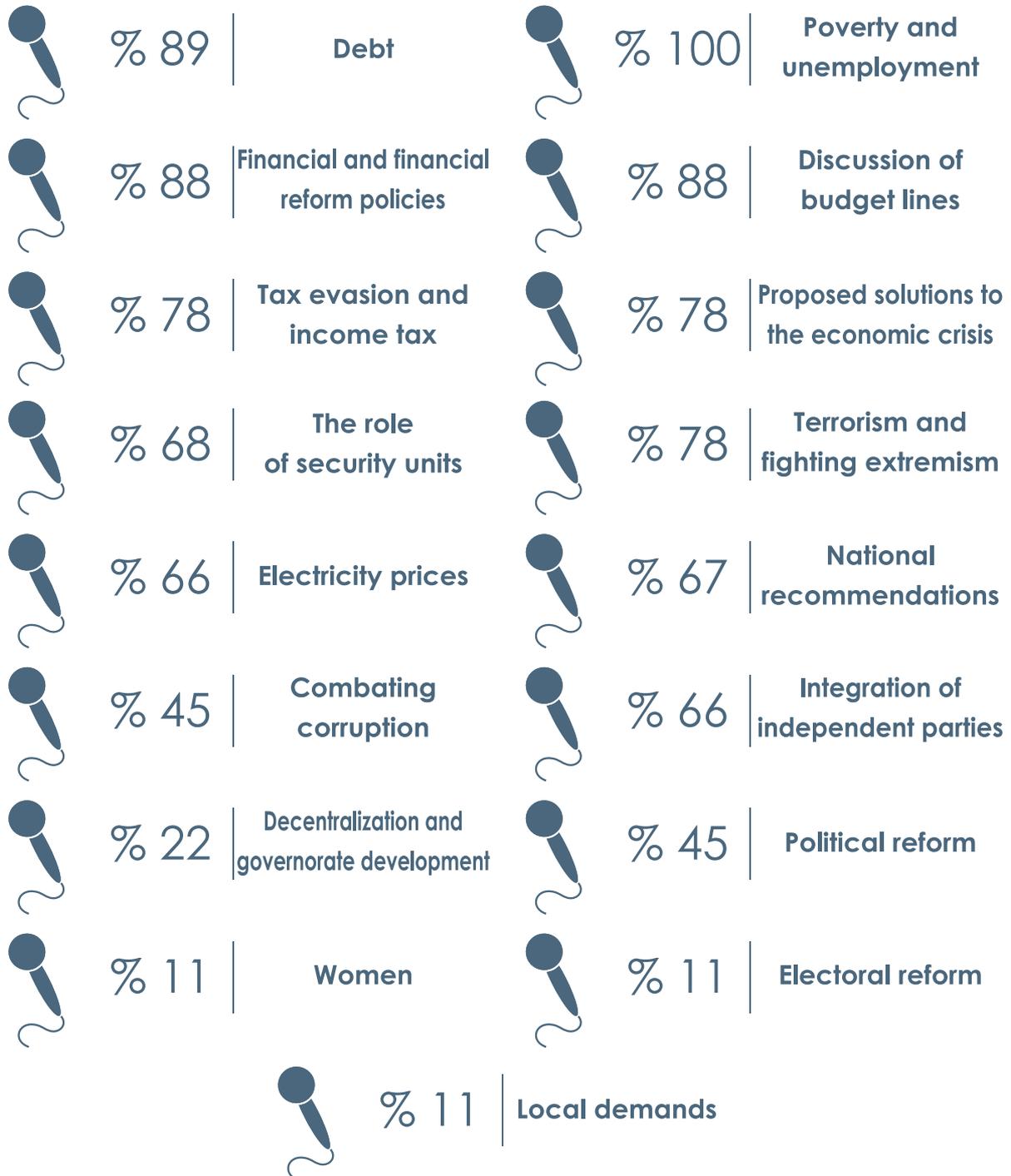


Indicators included in the parliamentary interventions during the 2015 Budget Discussions

Electoral reform	0%	Syrian refugees	22%
Decentralization	2%	Rehabilitation of infrastructure	22%
Environment	4%	Supporting the agricultural sector	22%
Women	5%	Supporting the health sector	24%
Industry	5%	Salary increases for the armed forces	26%
Monitoring of governmental units	6%	Gulf grants and its expenditure	26%
Supporting municipalities	7%	Fighting corruption	29%
Transportation sector	7%	Electricity	35%
Youth and sports	10%	Raising support and price spikes	36%
Syrian crisis	10%	Terrorism and combating extremism	36%
Health insurance	13%	The role of security units	40%
The Palestinian Issue	14%	Supporting the educational sector	40%
Supporting the tourism sector	15%	Debts	42%
Integration of independent institutions	15%	Lowered oil prices	43%
Development in governorates	16%	Financial policies	45%
Tax evasion	17%	Rural service requirements	51%
Income tax	18%	Public budget	52%
Encouragement of investment	21%	National service requirements	55%
Alternative resources	21%	Poverty pockets and unemployment	69%

Graph 5 lists the indicators included in parliamentary interventions during the 2015 budget discussions

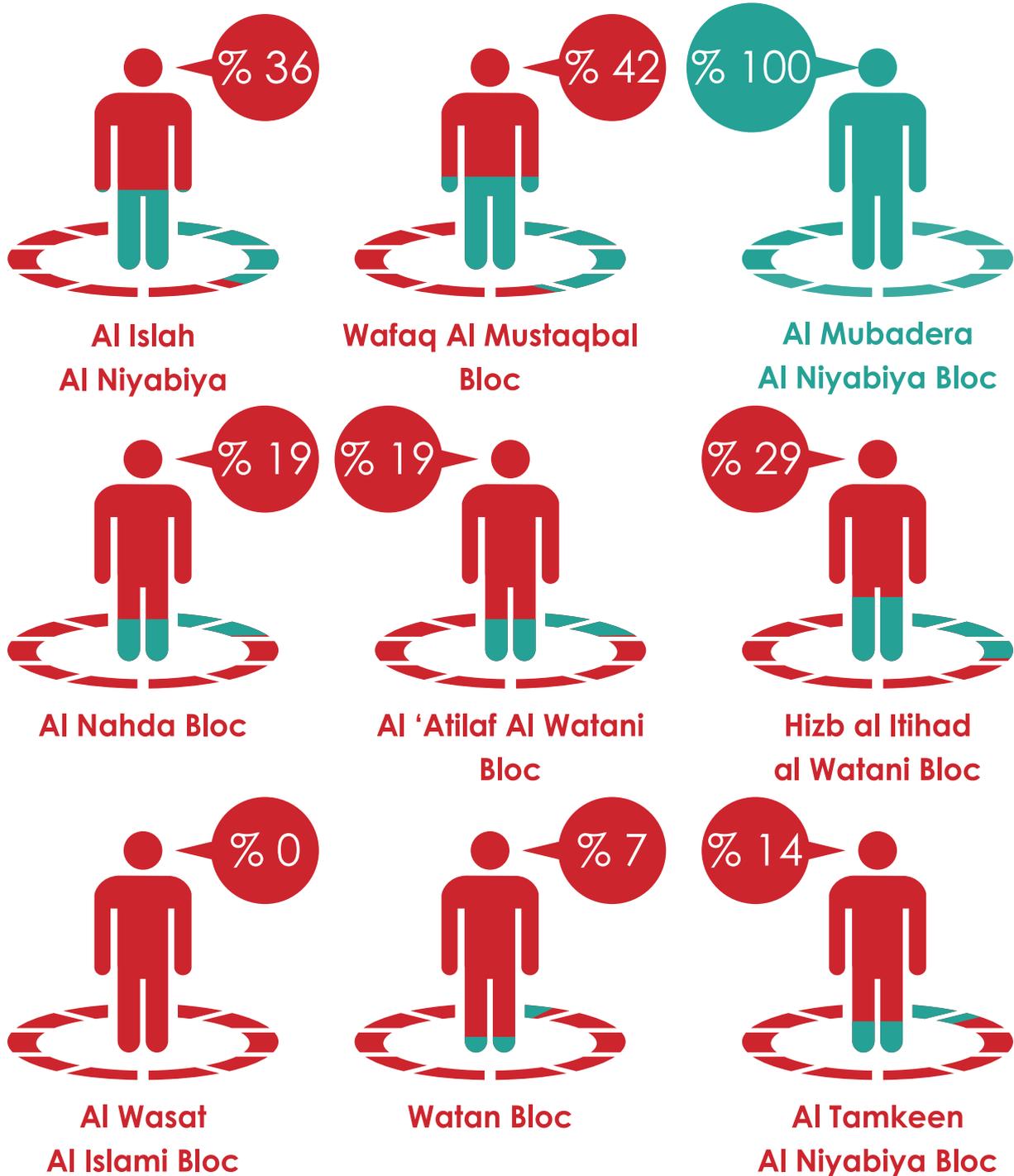
Indicators which were included in parliamentary Bloc interventions during the 2015 National Budget discussions



Graph 6 presents indicators included in parliamentary Bloc interventions during the Jordanian National Budget discussions for 2015

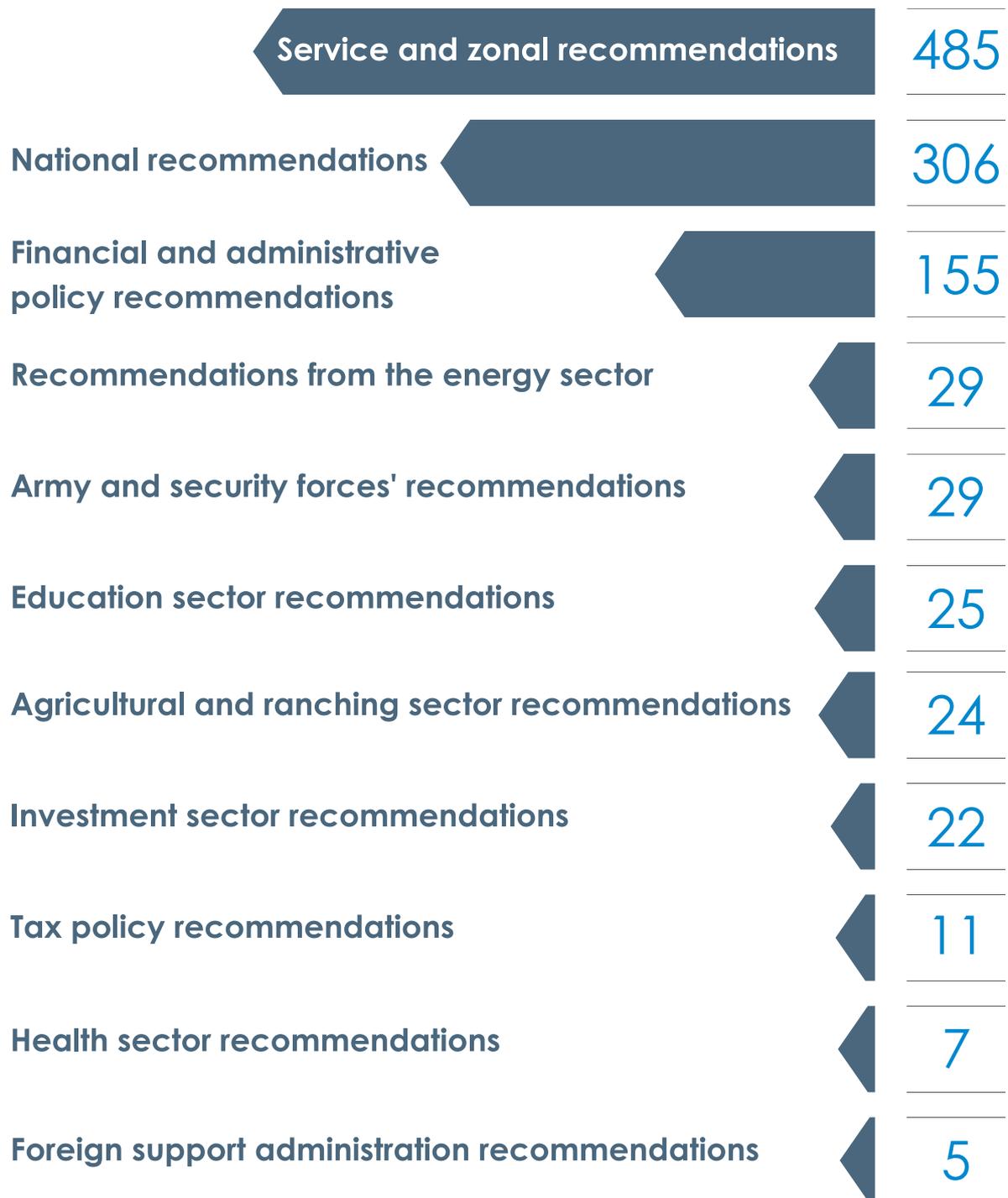


Percentage of parliamentary Bloc commitment to speech standardization in the 2015 National Budget discussions



Graph 7 shows the commitment of parliamentary bloc members to speech standards in the 2015 Jordanian National Budget discussions

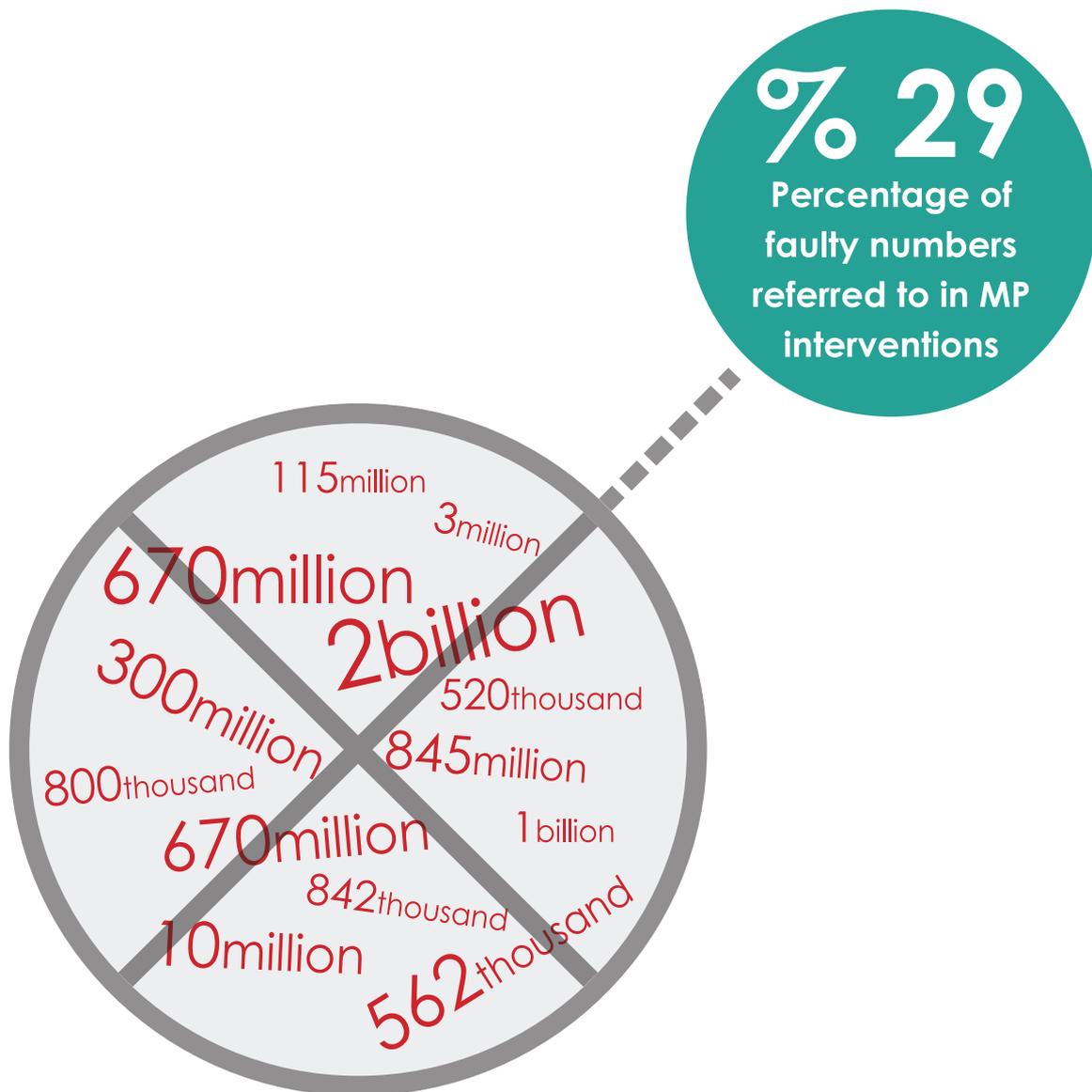
Recommendations cited by MPs during the 2015 Draft Budget Law discussions



Graph 8 shows the recommendations referred to by MPs during the 2015 Draft Budget Law discussions



Percentage of faulty numbers referred to in MP interventions throughout the 2015 Draft Budget Law discussion sessions



Graph 9 shows the percentage of faulty numbers referred to in MP interventions throughout the 2015 Draft Budget Law discussion sessions