

Question Time Scorecard – 15/10/2020



We have developed a scoring system to apply to BBC Question Time guests to gain a sense of how elite each weekly panel selection is. We score each guest either 0 (non-elite) or 1 (elite) in five categories: Income, Education, Connections, Honours/Titles, Political/Economic Views. Each guest achieves an overall elite rating out of 5, which is added to the scores of the other guests then divided by the number of guests to provide an overall rating for that week's panel.

Fiona Bruce, the presenter of the show, is a key figure in terms of directing debate and allocating panellists' speaking time so is always included in the calculation for that week's show.

For more information on why we are doing this and what we mean by “elite” check out [this blog post](#).

If you'd like to get involved in the project tweet or e-mail us!

INCOME

Income is the most powerful indicator of elitism. Those with wealth have a wider range of options than those without and a vested interest (conscious or otherwise) in sustaining the economic framework that generates their affluence

Classification	0 (Non-Elite)	1 (Elite)
Criteria	Yearly salary < £68,000	Yearly salary > £68,000 OR Verified millionaire
Panel		<i>Fiona Bruce scores 1</i> <i>BBC Salary for 17/18 listed as £259,9990</i>
		<i>Douglas Ross scores 1</i> <i>Member of Parliament (Salary £81,932)</i>
		<i>Seema Malhotra scores 1</i> <i>Member of Parliament (Salary £81,932)</i>
		<i>Kate Forbes scores 1</i> <i>MSP salary £64,470 but can also claim expenses so real income > £68,000 (Kate claimed £43,208 expenses in 2017-18 according to The Scotsman)</i>
	<i>Miriam Brett scores 0</i> <i>Income cannot be verified</i>	
		<i>Mark Walport scores 1</i> <i>Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and illustrious past roles as Government Chief Scientific Adviser indicate income of > £68,000 per year</i>
		<i>Ian Wood scores 1</i> <i>Verified billionaire</i>

EDUCATION

The Sutton Trust reported in 2016 that Oxford and Cambridge recruit more students from eight independent/highly competitive schools (such as Eton) than almost 3,000 UK state schools put together. A [linked government report](#) stated that “Our examination of who gets the top jobs in Britain today found elitism so stark that it could be called ‘Social Engineering’”, with independent schools and Oxbridge a key component in this social selection.

Classification	0 (Non-Elite)	1 (Elite)
Criteria	State school attendee Non-Oxbridge higher education	Attended a private/independent school OR Attended Oxford, Cambridge or equivalent elite overseas university in top ten of Times Higher Education Rankings
Panel		Fiona Bruce scores 1 <i>Attended Herford College, Oxford</i>
	Douglas Ross scores 0 <i>Meets criteria</i>	
	Seema Malhotra scores 0 <i>Meets criteria</i>	
		Kate Forbes scores 1 <i>Studied at Cambridge</i>
	Miriam Brett scores 0 <i>Meets criteria</i>	
		Mark Walport scores 1 <i>Attended Cambridge</i>
		Ian Wood scores 1 <i>Attended private Robert Gordon's College</i>

CONNECTIONS

It's not what you know, it's who you know shouldn't apply in a democracy...but most would agree that it does. Many high-ranking politicians and journalists (e.g. The Millibands, the Dimblebys) are embedded in the elite through family ties or are members of private clubs whose "exclusive" status marks them out as networking hubs for the elite. Moreover, if QT guests count as friends/kin people who occupy positions of power throughout politics, business and the media this again makes them less likely to reflect common opinion or present an unbiased view of institutions in which a loved one, confidante or network acquaintance plays a key role.

Classification	0 (Non-Elite)	1 (Elite)
Criteria	No close family, friendship or networking ties to high-ranking figures in politics, business, the media or other powerful institutions	One or more close family, friendship or networking ties to high-ranking figures in politics, business, the media or other powerful institutions
Panel		<p>Fiona Bruce scores 1 <i>Father a high ranking businessman, regional managing director of Unilever (2017 turnover 53.7 billion euros)</i> <i>(source)</i> <i>Husband Nigel Sharrocks a high-ranking businessman, CEO of the marketing company Aegis Group Northern Europe which represents companies with cumulative turnover of £500 billion</i> <i>(source 1) (source 2)</i></p>
		<p>Douglas Ross scores 1 <i>Parliamentary Register of Member's Interests</i> confirms that he received donations from wealthy individuals and The Carlton Club, a conservative private members club that only allowed women to join as full members in 2008</p>
		<p>Seema Malhotra scores 1 <i>Married to financier Sushil Kumar Saluja, an influential figure in Accenture and TheCityUK</i></p>
	<p>Kate Forbes scores 0 <i>Previous career in business suggests connections in this area but nothing significant that could be verified</i></p>	
		<p>Miriam Brett scores 1 <i>SNP candidate for Shetland at 2017 general election – indicating connections</i></p>

		<i>in a sphere beyond her “native” domain of economics</i>
		Mark Walport scores 1 <i>Illustrious roles in government, SAGE, educational institutes (documented here) and achievements such as Fellow of the Royal Society indicate elite connections</i>
	Ian Wood scores 0 <i>A businessman with his level of wealth likely has many elite connections but none that we could satisfactorily verify</i>	

HONOURS/TITLES

It seems fair to assume that those vested with hereditary titles such as Earl, Duke, Baronet, etc can be classed as elite. Prestigious titles bestowed by unelected bodies, such as OBEs, membership of the House of Lords and Church titles like Bishop and Archbishop, are often awarded regardless of background (e.g. OBEs to sports stars from poor backgrounds) but nonetheless suggest elite approval of these individuals – they are “vetted by the elite”.

Classification	0 (Non-Elite)	1 (Elite)
Criteria	No high-ranking hereditary title No high-ranking honour/title bestowed by an unelected body	Possesses a high-ranking hereditary title OR Possesses a high-ranking honour/title bestowed by an unelected body
Panel	<i>Fiona Bruce scores 0 She does not have high-ranking title...yet!</i>	
	<i>Douglas Ross scores 0 Only title is a democratic one: Member of Parliament.</i>	
	<i>Seema Malhotra scores 0 Only title is a democratic one: Member of Parliament.</i>	
	<i>Kate Forbes scores 0 Meets criteria</i>	
	<i>Miriam Brett scores 0 Meets criteria</i>	
		<i>“Sir” Mark Walport scores 1 Knight Bachelor (2009)</i>
		<i>“Sir” Ian Wood scores 1 GBE</i>

POLITICAL/ECONOMIC VIEWS

It isn't entirely fair to classify someone as financially elite because they are wealthy. There are examples of financially privileged individuals who have campaigned for redistribution of wealth. Therefore, we take into account economic and political viewpoints expressed verbally or through voting patterns

Classification	0 (Non-Elite)	1 (Elite)
Criteria	Political outlook prioritises what we might call “public wealth” – redistribution of wealth, living wage, wage rises in line with or above inflation, protection or investment in public services, union and worker’s rights, nationalisation of industries	Political outlook prioritises what we might call “private wealth” – low tax rates, downsizing of state, privatisation of state services, benefit freezes or cuts, public sector pay freezes, limitation of trade union powers
Panel	<p><i>Fiona Bruce scores 0</i> <i>As a journalist she does not express strong views in this area*</i></p>	
		<p><i>Douglas Ross scores 1</i> <i>As per <u>They Work for You</u>:</i> <i>“Generally voted against laws to promote equality and human rights” and</i> <i>“Consistently voted against higher taxes on banks” – affirming typical Conservative voting patterns</i></p>
	<p><i>Seema Malhotra scores 0</i> <i>Generally voted for raising welfare benefits at least in line with prices</i> and <i>Generally voted for a banker’s bonus tax and for higher taxes on banks</i></p>	
		<p><i>Kate Forbes scores 1</i> <i>As Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Finance it can be assumed that she will push business interests and the economic status quo</i></p>
	<p><i>Miriam Brett scores 0</i> <i>Political/economic views judged centre-left as per social media posts</i></p>	.
	<p><i>Mark Walport scores 0</i> <i>Scientist whose political/economic views cannot be discerned</i></p>	

		<p><i>Ian Wood scores 1</i> <i>Billionaire status indicates adherence to</i> <i>free market ideology</i></p>
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* We accept that the burden of proof for making an “elite” judgment lies with us. Therefore, when sufficiently clear evidence to classify a panellist as elite cannot be found they will be classed non-elite in that category as a default. We may, for example, strongly suspect that someone has an income above £68,000 or influential contacts but if we can’t access information that suggests this beyond reasonable doubt we will classify them as non-elite for these categories.

Overall elite ratings (for guests and the panel as a whole):

Total Score	0	1	2	3	4	5
Corresponding Status	Not Elite	A Little Elite	Quite Elite	Elite	Very Elite	Exceptionally Elite

*Fiona Bruce scores three out of five – she is **Elite***

*Douglas Ross scores three out of five – he is **Elite***

*Seema Malhotra scores two out of five – she is **Quite Elite***

*Kate Forbes scores three out of five – she is **Elite***

*Miriam Brett scores one out of five – she is **A Little Elite***

*Mark Walport scores four out of five – he is **Very Elite***

*Ian Wood scores four out of five – he is **Very Elite***

Combined score of panel = $3 + 3 + 2 + +3 + 1 + 4 + 4 = 20$

Divided by no. of panellists (7) = 2.86, rounded to closest no.

*= **3***

***OVERALL ELITE RATING FOR THIS EDITION OF QUESTION TIME
IS:***

3 – ELITE