

Advocacy funding metrics for groups quoted on national press and broadcast media

February 2020

Executive summary

Contrary to claims that groups advocating lower government spending receive disproportionate media attention, are particularly well funded and enjoy large numbers of staff compared to those making the case for higher spending, these findings show that the reverse is true. In absolute terms, groups which advocate lower government spending receive less media attention than those which advocate greater government spending. Lower government spending advocates do receive more media attention relative to their staff numbers and income, however. This is because their staff and income are dwarfed by those advocating higher government spending.

- Think tanks and campaign **groups advocating lower spending comprise just one in ten** of the total prominent groups, yet around half of that total advocate higher spending.
- Think tanks and campaign **groups advocating higher public spending are mentioned in the national media six times more frequently** than those advocating lower public spending.
- Think tanks and campaign **groups advocating higher public spending have 37 times as many staff at their disposal** as those advocating lower public spending.
- Think tanks and campaign **groups advocating higher public spending enjoy funding 40 times greater** than those advocating lower public spending.

Methodological summary

Income and staff headcount figures were taken from the most recent accounts published at Companies House or the Charities Commission. Where only one of staff headcount or income data was available, the other figure was estimated by extrapolating an average of other organisations of the same type, based on the other of the two types of information that was available.

Position on public spending was analysed by assessing the most recent press releases and reports on the organisations' websites to see if there was evidence for advocacy of measures which would directly entail greater or reduced public expenditure. Some organisations might contend that a measure that would entail greater expenditure on the item in question might lead to an overall reduction due to a consequential fall in another related item of spending. Conversely, others might contend that a measure which directly reduces spending might lead to an overall increase in spending. For the purposes of this analysis, no attempt to quantify such potential consequences was made and only the direct effects were assessed.

The full methodology is at the end of this document.

Findings

During one week in August 2019 (11th to 17th), 227 British organisations outside the public sector were quoted or cited in the national press and broadcast media in articles and excerpts with a number of key words ('campaign', 'report', 'new research', and 'launch'). Those with more than five mentions were analysed and allocated to a type and then assessed for their stance on government spending.

Groups with more than five mentions

A total of 64 groups were mentioned more than five times. They were comprised of 4 who generally advocate lower spending, 28 who generally advocate higher spending, and 32 who are neutral (including those who had mixed evidence or a lack of evidence for a general position).

Charities, think tanks and campaign groups

Filtering out professional bodies, trades unions and business groups, 44 groups comprising charities, think tanks and campaign groups were mentioned more than five times. Of these, 3 advocate lower spending, 18 advocate higher spending and 23 are neutral.

The groups advocating lower spending have an estimated combined staff of 26 and income of £3 million. The groups advocating higher spending have an estimated combined staff of 4,157 and income of £325 million. The groups in the neutral category have an estimated combined staff of 23,592 and income of £1.7 billion.

Think tanks and campaign groups only

Filtering out charities except for those which are primarily either campaign groups or think tanks, 30 groups were mentioned more than five times. Of these, 3 advocate lower spending, 14 advocate higher spending and 13 are neutral.

The groups advocating lower spending have an estimated combined staff of 26 and income of £3 million. The groups advocating higher spending have an estimated combined staff of 963 and income of £120 million. The groups in the neutral category have an estimated combined staff of 594 and income of £112 million.

Tables

Table 1 - campaign groups and think tanks with more than five mentions, by position on spending

Spending position	Groups	Mentions	Income (£)	Staff
Lower spending	3	36	3,049,597	26.0
Neutral, mixed or no evidence	13	124	112,135,795	594.3
Higher spending	14	205	119,990,467	962.6
All	30	365	235,175,859	1582.9

Table 2 - campaign groups, think tanks and charities with more than five mentions, by position on spending

NB: the staff and income figures for groups in this table are likely to relate substantially to non-advocacy charitable functions and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

Spending position	Groups	Mentions	Income (£)	Staff
Lower spending	3	36	3,049,597	26.0
Neutral, mixed or no evidence	23	201	1,717,625,896	23,592.3
Higher spending	18	240	325,199,675	4,156.6
All	44	477	2,045,875,165	27,714.9

Table 3 - all groups with more than five mentions, by position on spending

Spending position	Groups	Mentions
Lower spending	4	42
Neutral, mixed or no evidence	32	317
Higher spending	28	370
All	64	729

Table 4 – charities, think tanks and campaign groups with more than five mentions who advocate lower government spending

Organisation	Mentions	Income (£)	Staff
Adam Smith Institute	11	528,597*	5
European Research Group	11	no data	no data
Institute of Economic Affairs	14	2,521,000	21

^{1*} Income figures with an asterisk have been estimated by applying the average rate from staff number data. Staff number figures with an asterisk have been estimated by applying the average rate from income data.

Table 5 – charities, think tanks and campaign groups with more than five mentions who advocate neither higher nor lower government spending

Organisation	Mentions	Income (£)	Staff
Big Brother Watch	10	110,492	7
Bright Blue	8	740,036*	7
Campaign for Real Education	10	no data	no data
Catholic church	8	no data	no data
Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support	6	357,829	15
Hope Not Hate	9	987,399	16
Howard League	7	957,027	18
Institute for Fiscal Studies	8	8,870,307	70.3
International Alliance for Responsible Drinking	16	235,000	1.5*
Kick It Out	11	868,745	13
Liberty	6	2,421,728	33.5
Macmillan Cancer Support	7	235,718,000	1,925
National Trust	18	520,021,000	14,000
Nesta	6	28,006,000	205
Oceana	8	no data	no data
Policy Exchange	12	3,012,936	25
Reform think	6	812,125	13
RSPB	7	138,353,000	2,245
RSPCA	6	132,635,000	1,795
TerraMar	6	2,269	0*
Wellcome Trust	6	484,800,000	1,797
Which?	13	93,120,000	390
Zoological Society of London	7	65,597,000	1,016

Table 6 – charities, think tanks and campaign groups with more than five mentions who advocate higher government spending

Organisation	Mentions	Income (£)	Staff
Campaign for Better Transport	15	630,482	11
Children's Society	6	38,408,000	756
Citizens UK	13	5,589,032	73
Close the Gap	10	282,676	4
Extinction Rebellion	7	973,952	6.3*
Fabians	21	755,985	14
Friends of the Earth	15	5,859,827	164
Greenpeace	9	23,671,544	178
Health for Care	6	no data	no data
Institute for Government	49	4,056,285	46
Mind	15	48,164,000	758
New Economics Foundation	10	3,517,793	55
NSPCC	8	118,328,000	1672
Prison Reform Trust	12	1,983,569	20

^{2*} Income figures with an asterisk have been estimated by applying the average rate from staff number data. Staff number figures with an asterisk have been estimated by applying the average rate from income data.

Railfuture	24	43,101	0**
Royal Aeronautical Society	6	4,995,221	42
Runnymede Trust	6	309,208	8
WWF	8	67,631,000	349

^{3**} Railfuture does not have any staff and relies on volunteers.

Table 7 – full list of mentioned organisations

Organisation	Mentions
Institute for Government	49
Railfuture	24
TUC	22
British Retail Consortium	21
Fabians	21
Police Federation	21
Federation of Small Businesses	20
National Trust	18
Nasuwat	16
PCS	16
Rail Delivery Group	16
International Alliance for Responsible Drinking	16
Campaign for Better Transport	15
Friends of the Earth	15
Mind	15
Royal College of GPs	15
Institute of Economic Affairs	14
Russell Group	14
Citizens UK	13
UK Finance	13
Which?	13
Policy Exchange	12
Prison Reform Trust	12
Adam Smith Institute	11
BHA	11
European Research Group	11
Kick It Out	11
Big Brother Watch	10
Campaign for Real Education	10
Close the Gap	10
New Economics Foundation	10
Royal College of Physicians	10
Greenpeace	9
Hope Not Hate	9
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales	9
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health	9
Bright Blue	8
Institute for Fiscal Studies	8
NSPCC	8
Oceana	8
WWF	8
Catholic church	8
Extinction Rebellion	7
Food and Drink Federation	7
Howard League	7
Macmillan Cancer Support	7

NARS	7
Royal College of Psychiatrists	7
RSPB	7
Zoological Society of London	7
Bar Council	6
Children's Society	6
Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support	6
Health for Care	6
Institute of Directors	6
Liberty	6
Nesta	6
Reform think	6
RMT	6
Royal Aeronautical Society	6
RSPCA	6
Runnymede Trust	6
TerraMar	6
Wellcome Trust	6
Amnesty International	5
Association of Dermatologists	5
Association of School and College Leaders	5
British Association of Dermatologists	5
Campaign for Chris Williamson	5
Faculty of Dental Surgery	5
Home Builders Federation	5
Human Rights Watch	5
League Against Cruel Sports	5
Opec	5
Scottish Retail Consortium	5
Victims' Rights Campaign	5
Animal Aid	4
Association of British Insurers	4
Better Sleep Council	4
British Nutrition Foundation	4
Centre for Economic and Business Research	4
Centre for Policy Studies	4
Centre for Social Justice	4
Chartered Trading Standards Institute	4
Countryside Alliance	4
Criminal Bar Association	4
Entrepreneurs Network	4
Harpur Trust	4
Health Foundation	4
Law Society	4
Living Wage Foundation	4
London Grid for Learning	4
National Association of Funeral Directors	4
National Centre for Social Research	4
Onward	4

Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts	4
Scottish Land & Estates	4
Social Market Foundation	4
Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors	4
SRC	4
Transparency International	4
Unite the union	4
We Own It	4
Wonkhe	4
Beyond Meat	3
Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting	3
Fringe Society	3
Investment Association	3
Keep Britain Tidy	3
National Trainers Federation	3
Ocean Exploration Trust	3
Royal College of Surgeons	3
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	3
StopWatch	3
The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery	3
Tighar	3
Transport Focus	3
Wild Justice	3
10:10 Climate Action	2
Action on Salt	2
Alcohol Change UK	2
Alzheimer's Society	2
Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants	2
Association of Colleges	2
Association of Convenience Stores	2
Balpa	2
Born Free Foundation	2
British Lung Foundation	2
Campaign Against Antisemitism	2
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	2
Chartered Management Institute	2
Choice!	2
Church of Scotland	2
CIPD	2
Civitas	2
Climate Action 100+	2
Dementia UK	2
Doctors for Choice	2
East Belfast Community Initiative	2
Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society	2
Ella Roberta Family Foundation	2
Fair Fringe Campaign	2
Fair Play for Women	2
Fair Telecoms Campaign	2

Finance Uncovered	2
Forum of Private Business	2
Get Safe Online	2
Global Witness	2
Institute for Jewish Policy Research	2
Institute of Physics	2
International Fund for Animal Welfare	2
John's Campaign	2
Living Rent	2
London First	2
Look UK	2
Miscarriage Association	2
Momentum campaign	2
National Custom & Self Build Association	2
National Deaf Children's Society	2
National Union of Students	2
New Schools Network	2
Politics for the Many	2
Power for People	2
Renewable Energy Foundation	2
Resolution Foundation	2
Resolver.co.uk	2
RIBA	2
Royal Society for Public Health	2
Scottish Intensive Care Society	2
ShareAction	2
Sustainable Food Trust	2
Tax Watch	2
Trans-form Drug Policy Foundation	2
Tui Care Foundation	2
UK Infrastructure Transitions Research Consortium	2
Usdaw	2
Victim Rights Campaign	2
Wellcome Sanger Institute	2
Wine Drinkers UK	2
Women's Institute	2
ABI	1
Acting Your Age Campaign	1
Action on Sugar	1
Agenda	1
Animal Justice Project	1
Another Europe is Possible	1
Aquaculture Stewardship Council	1
ASCL	1
British Liver Trust	1
Camden Against Violence	1
Campaign for Science and Engineering	1
Canna Development Trust	1
Carbon Trust	1

Care Campaign for the Vulnerable	1
Centre for English Identity	1
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals	1
Electoral Reform Society	1
European Bioinformatics Institute	1
Federation of Bath Residents' Associations	1
Fishing for Leave	1
Forest Stewardship Council	1
High Pay Centre	1
Indian Workers' Association	1
Institute for Race Relations	1
Institute of Taxation	1
Institute of Physics	1
Justice4Grenfell	1
Labour for a Green New Deal	1
Labour for a Socialist Europe	1
Middle East Institute	1
National Association of Stable Staff	1
National Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence	1
National Secular Society	1
Open Cages	1
Open Labour	1
PAN-UK	1
Pesticide Action Network UK	1
Plain English Campaign	1
Queen's English Society	1
Race on the Agenda	1
Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals	1
Scottish Wildlife Trust	1
Society for the Protection of Unborn Children	1
Syria Relief	1
TSSA	1
Vegan Society	1
World Land Trust	1

Methodology

A media monitoring agency provided a list of all national press and broadcast mentions between 11 August 2019 and 17 August 2019 of five key phrases selected to capture media coverage of research by think tanks and campaign groups: ‘campaign’, ‘launch’, ‘launching’, ‘new research’ and ‘report’. The names of organisations based in the United Kingdom mentioned in the 8,671 press articles and broadcast excerpts were extracted and the number of mentions calculated.

Organisations with more than five mentions were shortlisted as representative of those receiving significant media attention. This method was chosen selected before conducting the work and aims to provide a workable and objective measure of how media attention is distributed across the spectrum of views relating to public spending. The relatively short (one week) range and the narrow

search terms mean that the list cannot be seen as a robust measure of which particular individual organisations receive more or less attention relative to other groups. Nonetheless, while the particular week chosen, the short range and the keywords might all have an effect on whether or not individual organisations make it onto the list and their position in the list, the scope for these factors affecting the overall performance of a category of organisation is much smaller.

The shortlisted organisations with more than five media mentions were then assessed by category. Trade unions, business groups, professional bodies, public sector, corporate and international organisations were disregarded, leaving only think tanks, campaign groups and other charities (ie, charities which are not also in another category). These groups were analysed to find their income, staff headcount and position on government spending.

Income and staff headcount figures were taken from the most recent accounts published at Companies House or the Charities Commission. All except five related to accounting periods ending in 2018. Where this data was not available, the organisation's website was checked for information. Where only one of staff headcount or income data was available, the other figure was estimated by extrapolating an average of other organisations of the same type, based on the other of the two types of information that was available.

Position on public spending was analysed by assessing the most recent press releases and reports on the organisations' websites to see if there was evidence for advocacy of measures which would directly entail greater or reduced public expenditure. Some organisations might contend that a measure that would entail greater expenditure on the item in question might lead to an overall reduction due to a consequential fall in another related item of spending. Conversely, others might contend that a measure which directly reduces spending might lead to an overall increase in spending. For the purposes of this analysis, no attempt to quantify such potential consequences was made and only the direct effects were assessed.