



## YouGovStone 'Influentials Monitor' - survey results July 17<sup>th</sup>.

This summary contains the results of the YouGovStone *Influentials Monitor*, a survey of 252 senior individuals who are all members of the YouGovStone ThinkTank of influential people, drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds including politics, business, media and academia.

### The UK-US Special Relationship

US Presidential hopeful Barack Obama last week brought up the topic of the US/UK 'special relationship', first mentioned by Winston Churchill in 1946. Senator Obama said that he would recalibrate the relationship to make the UK a more equal partner and so this week's 'Influentials Monitor' asked respondents what they made of this 'special relationship' and Obama's comments.

Half the 'influentials' questioned (49%) believe that the 'special relationship' between the UK and US is currently a positive thing for the UK. But by contrast 34% think it is now a negative for the UK, with the remaining 17% believing it is neither positive nor negative.

The idea of a recalibrated special relationship, as mentioned by Senator Obama, is more positively received. Almost two thirds (64%) rate the idea as positive while just 10% think it is a negative concept.

Over half (58%) believe the UK can never be a full partner in the relationship though we will later see this figure change. However a similar number (56%) say that the relationship has helped the UK play a greater role in world affairs than it might have done otherwise. Just under half (49%) thought the relationship creates resentment towards the two countries amongst other nations but 43% claim it is vital for Britain's long-term security to remain close to the US.

44% don't believe the general UK public really understands what the special relationship is all about, such as the level of cooperation in military planning and operations, sharing of nuclear technology, and intelligence. 41% suggest that the UK's future lies more with Europe than the US and a third believe the UK is too closely tied to the US.

A third (32%) do not think any real changes would come as a result of a recalibrated relationship. On a more positive note, 41% think it would improve US/EU relations, 36% think it might allow the UK to push global environmental issues up the US agenda, as well as global poverty issues (31%). However, even after considering a newly calibrated relationship, 38% still don't think the UK can be a full partner, despite any US enthusiasm for the idea.

Comments from respondents on this subject included:

*"Britain is part of the EU not the USA. Rightly the US government looks after the interests of its citizens not those of the UK. Thus the relationship between our governments must be based on these facts not fantasy."*

*"If we do not want to align ourselves with Europe then the US is a necessary evil."*



*“Defence and intelligence relationships are so close that no president can materially affect them in a single term.”*

*“The US-UK special relationship has generally been of benefit to both countries and the world, but all this is eclipsed by the mistake of the US in invading Iraq and, even more, the folly of the UK in taking part in that invasion. We should have stayed out, as we very wisely stayed out of Vietnam- and the US had a stronger case over Vietnam than over Iraq.”*

*“For the US-UK special relationship to prosper the US should listen more to the UK on building a more positive policy on World Affairs. The UK and US should be seen as the two countries everyone wants to be friends with and emulate.” Ian Bruce, former Conservative MP.*

*“The UK US relationship has been entirely one sided. It has resulted in the UK being involved in the mad Iraq war. It resulted in huge pressure being brought from the USA to dismantle the British Empire prematurely. It resulted in a recently entirely one sided extradition agreement with the USA. After 9/11, we have been dominated by American anti-terrorist measures which are ineffective and inconvenient. In return we have had nothing. The USA has never extradited one IRA terrorist. Furthermore, huge pressure has been brought to bear by the USA to deal with terrorists such as Adams and McGuinness.” Sir Tim Cassel QC.*

## **The Government’s Proposals on Knife Crime**

Following last week’s Influentials Monitor which looked at knife crime, we followed up this week by asking respondents their views on the Home Secretary’s latest proposals to address the problem.

Almost three quarters (73%) said the ideas had been ‘rushed out’ and 59% said they were ‘half baked’. Just 21% of our sample agreed with her reported comments that confronting offenders with the consequences of their actions will be more effective than jailing anyone convicted of possessing a knife.

When it came to the idea of getting offenders into A&E departments to meet victims, an idea which Jacqui Smith confirmed on TV but then denied, 70% said that A&E departments just weren’t set up to do this sort of thing. It now seems however that this concept would simply be for offenders to meet health professionals.

In terms of a general approach to the problem, 64% agreed that a presumption to prosecute is essential but 40% thought the criminal justice system wouldn’t be able to cope with the increased numbers being convicted and punished. 42% thought that more money for stop-and-search would reduce knife crime, while only 25% agreed that stronger community sentencing for knife crimes, as proposed by the Government, will be an effective deterrent to carrying a knife.

Comments from respondents about knife crime and the Government’s proposals included:

*“Too much political correctness and human rights are getting in the way. If you use a knife on someone then the penalty should be very harsh indeed and zero tolerance is a must.”*

*“Restorative Justice is the best approach.”*



*“Meaningless media-driven gesture politics at their worst.”*

*“Social inclusion needs to be tackled from very young, with good pre-school and school programs. These proposals are not tackling fundamental issues.”*

*“Offenders should be visiting their victims in the morgue, not hospital.”*

*“The statistics on knife crime do not yet demonstrate any kind of upward trend. I fear we may be in the midst of a moral panic over knives that will do nothing to heal the problems of inner-city violence and may actually increase fear, reduce trust and make it more likely that young people will carry weapons to counter a perceived threat.” Mark Easton, BBC News Home Editor*

## **Civil Partnerships**

In light of the recent legal victory by Lillian Ladele, a registrar for Islington Council who refused to conduct civil ceremonies for same-sex couples due to her religious beliefs, and who was recruited prior to knowing she would have to conduct them, we asked our influentials what they thought the result of such a ruling might be.

Top of the answers with 46% was the idea that ‘it has opened the door for all sorts of refusals based on various beliefs’. There was then a split with 44% saying she should not work as a registrar if she did not want to have to conduct same-sex civil ceremonies while 41% said she should be allowed to choose not to conduct such ceremonies.

There was however much sympathy for Ms Ladele that the ruling from Islington Council came in long after she began working for them and that they had handled the situation poorly.

Interestingly 34% decided that the ruling was a victory over ‘political correctness gone mad’ but for 31% it supported a view that ‘religious views interfere with modern society’. 29% felt that it actively encourages discrimination against homosexuals.

Comments from our respondents included:

*“If we are preaching tolerance then tolerance of somebody's religious beliefs should be high on the list.”*

*“This ruling should only apply to registrars recruited before same sex couples were given the right to marry.”*

*“All rights must be protected including religious rights, the matter was very badly handled by the council, she should have been allowed to opt out and not have been threatened.”*

**YouGovStone’s ThinkTank is a group of over 3,000 influential individuals, predominantly UK based, drawn from various sectors including politics, business, media, the arts, academia, health, charity and law. The *Influentials Monitor* is a weekly survey completed by a representative sample of the ThinkTank.**

**For more details about these results or how to ask your questions to the ThinkTank, please contact Oliver Rowe, YouGovStone's Business Development Director on +44 (0)207 012 6032 or email [oliver.rowe@yougovstone.com](mailto:oliver.rowe@yougovstone.com)**