

IN THIS ISSUE

- [Malevolent USA?](#)
 - [It never rains \(but it pours\)](#)
 - [Is football coming home?](#)
 - [Iowa: field of dreams](#)
 - [Superstars](#)
 - [Baffling bureaucracy](#)
-

Malevolent USA?

America is no longer regarded as ‘a force for good in the world’ by most British adults, according to the latest Populus [poll](#) for The Times. Only 44% think the statement is now true, with fractionally more (45%) disagreeing. But beneath this overall picture there are stark differences of view. A majority of men (48% to 41%) think that America is still a force for good in the world, but women take the opposite view by a slightly wider margin (48% to 39%).

The poll also reveals a big divergence in view on political lines. A majority of Labour and Conservative supporters think that America is a force for good in the world (53% and 56% respectively). But only a third (33%) of Liberal Democrat voters agree and nearly two thirds (63%) disagree.

These new figures represent significant slippage in support for America among British voters. Three years ago a major poll for the BBC asking ‘what the world thinks of America’ found 56% of Britons regarding the USA as a force for good in the world, 20% more than the number disagreeing. At that point only Canada, Israel and the US itself had a more positive view of America.

The recent Populus poll also found a significant drop since April in the number of people thinking that ‘a close and special relationship with the US is important for Britain’s long term security’ – 58% agreeing with this statement now, compared with 71% two months ago. And more than

three voters in five (62%) think that 'if Gordon Brown takes over as Prime Minister he should be much less close to President Bush than Tony Blair has been'.

http://www.populuslimited.com/poll_summaries/2006_06_06_times.

It Never Rains (But It Pours)

There has been a lot of media coverage in recent weeks about Britain's water shortage, which results from a long period of low rainfall notwithstanding last month having been the wettest May since records began. In most parts of the country hosepipe bans are in effect and some water companies have warned of standpipes if people don't start to use less water.

But the water industry has a major communications and PR battle on its hands, according to a new Populus/BBC poll for the Daily Politics. More than four out of five (82%) think that the amount of water that could be saved by people using less water at home 'is nothing compared with what the water companies waste through leaks', with fewer than one in seven (16%) disagreeing. An even more overwhelming majority of British voters think that the privatised water companies should be compelled to fix all leaky pipes before they are allowed to keep any profit at all, according to the poll: 89% support this proposition, with just 10% disagreeing. And more than half of voters (56%) believe that there would be fewer problems with Britain's water supply if the industry was renationalized.

http://www.populuslimited.com/poll_summaries/2006_06_20_Daily_Politics.htm

Is Football Coming Home?

With many cars and most white vans bedecked with the cross of St George and terrestrial television schedules given over almost wholesale to football matches, you could be forgiven for thinking that the whole country is immersed in the progress of the England football in the FIFA World Cup. But 40% are 'not really interested' in the World Cup, according to a Populus poll on the eve of the tournament - and this is true of half of all women. Perhaps unsurprisingly more than half of people in Scotland (52%) and Wales (58%) also declare themselves uninterested in the tournament.

The poll also found that the nation is much more expectant of England success than was the case two years ago for the Euro 2004 tournament. Overall almost one in four (23%) think that England will get to the World Cup final and 19% believe that England will win, more than three times the number (6%) who thought the team would win Euro 2004.

http://www.populuslimited.com/poll_summaries/2006_06_06_times.htm

Iowa: Field of Dreams

The next US Presidential election is still nearly eighteen months away, but those aspiring to succeed George W. Bush are already jostling for position and the first poll of support for the various potential Democratic Party candidates in Iowa where many candidacies have foundered in the state's caucus, traditionally the first of the election primaries – has just been published. The poll, commissioned by the state's biggest newspaper the Des Moines Register, perhaps surprisingly puts former Senator John Edwards – running mate to John Kerry in the last Presidential election and runner-up in the 2004 Iowa caucuses – ahead of the field, with 30% support. Mr Edwards has, as the Register observes, 'been a frequent visitor' to the state in recent months and this has pushed him ahead of Hillary Clinton (on 26%) and Mr Kerry (12%). The poll also probably signals the end of the prospective ambitions of Iowa's own Governor, Tom Vilsack who is unlikely to be taken seriously nationally after trailing in fourth, with just 10%, in his own state.

<http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060611/NEWS09/606110338/1001/archive>

Superstars

While much of the world (and most of Britain) is – to some degree or other – enthralled by the World Cup unfolding in Germany, America's different sporting interests are underlined by the latest annual Harris survey of the country's favourite sporting stars.

Only one soccer player appears on the list – and even that is not someone featuring in the US world cup team, but Mia Hamm, star of the women's team. She is third most popular sportswoman in America, having been number one a year ago; above her on the list are the tennis-playing Williams sisters, Venus, who is top of the list, and Serena, who is second for the third year running.

For the first time since 1993 America's favourite sportsman is someone other than Michael Jordan, the legendary basketball player who led the Chicago Bulls to six world championships in the 1990s. He is still the favourite sporting figure among 18–30 year-olds and 40–60 year-olds, but is replaced at the top of the list by golfing prodigy Tiger Woods, who is the favourite only of the over-60s, but is so by such a margin that he comes top of the overall table. In addition to Woods and Jordan the list includes 3 other basketball players, 2 baseball players, 2 NASCAR drivers and one American football star. The women's list, below the top three, features two golfers, two figure skaters, two tennis players and a NASCAR driver.

http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=674

Baffling Bureaucracy

Government departments are the most likely source of documents that are difficult to understand, according to a new Populus poll for Mencap to mark the charity's 'Make It Clear' campaign for its ongoing Learning Disability Week.

Nearly half of respondents (47%) said they had received documents from government offices that were difficult to understand – more than from insurance companies (36%), banks (29%), and telephone and utility companies (21% each). Nearly a quarter (24%) said they or someone they knew had had problems such as missed appointments or had lost out financially because relevant documents were impenetrable. The most common aspects of documents that cause confusion are legal 'small print' (69%) and instructions for putting together furniture or operating electrical goods (41% – although women were much more likely to say this than men).

http://www.populuslimited.com/poll_summaries/2006_06_19_Mencap.htm

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