

## #40DayChallenge Day 10

Outline and explain two reasons why governments might not use sociological research in their policy making (10)

One reason that sociological research might not be used by governments in their policy-making is due to a clash of ideologies. Research that comes from a social democratic perspective, for example, research into poverty or the impacts of austerity, is unlikely to inform the decision making of right wing or neo-liberal governments, whose prime objective is to reduce social spending, increase personal responsibility and reduce taxation. The reason for this is that social democratic research will inevitably find that there is a need for investment in social spending, whether that be on improving social housing, improving wages or on additional educational spending in order to solve the problem. An example of this would be the current debate around knife crime. Left wing thinkers suggest that the problem is due to a lack of opportunities, racism in wider society and the marginalisation of groups. Adopting a left realist approach to solving these issues would involve investment in training and employment, promoting inclusion in wider society and the use of community policing and youth workers to intervene at an early level to prevent knife crime. This would be costly and is not considered due to the policy of austerity and reductions to public services. Instead, right realist policies such as 'stop and search' are being proposed as the right realist ideology is more aligned with the ideology of the Conservative Party.

A second reason for governments failing to implement policy based upon sociological research is the influence of think tanks and lobbyists. Whilst most sociological research would examine social factors behind social issues, think tanks, particularly those to the right of the political spectrum, often rely upon neo-liberal economic thinking to provide solutions to problems, viewing the economic performance of the UK as more important than social factors such as poverty, homelessness, healthcare and education. Furthermore, links between governments and think tanks are often reciprocal. For example, Iain Duncan Smith aided the set-up of the Centre for Social Justice, a think tank which suggested the implementation of Universal Credit. This was put into place by the then Minister for Work and pensions, Iain Duncan Smith. Think Tanks can also assume the role of lobbyists. Companies will provide donations to political

## #40DayChallenge Day 10

parties in order to protect their interests. Once a political party is in power, lobbyists, representing certain key industries (arms, tobacco, alcohol, pharmaceuticals) will pressurise governments into passing laws that benefit their interests. Consequently, sociological research which contradicts these ideas is rejected in favour of the ideas of think tanks. An example of this could be the denial of climate change by American President Donald Trump in order to pass legislation that benefits global oil and fossil fuel companies.