6 Out Of 10 Want Police Force Over Private Involvement

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In response to substantial budget cuts affectingÂ forces across the UK there have been moves to increase the role of private companies in providing services traditionally undertaken by the police. In March, the West Midlands and Surrey forces formally invited bids from privately ownedÂ firms to supply Â£1.5bn worth of services, including 999 call handling, prisoner transfer and patrolling neighbourhoods.

Following protests from members of the public and unions it was announced in May that West Midlands police would put their tender process on hold until July to allow time for greater public consultation. Despite this set back the UK head of security firm G4S revealed in an interview with the Guardian this week that he expects private companies to be running large parts of the police service within the next five years.

Asking people how they feel about a possible increase in the role of private companies in providing services traditionally undertaken by the police, TNS BMRB found 60% to be opposed with only 12% in favour:

There was little variation in response depending on region with 60% of people in the North and Midlands saying they were opposed and 59% in the South. Age does seem to be an influencing factor with three quarters (73%) of those aged 55 and over saying they were opposed, compared with a third (34%) of people aged 18-24.

Commenting on the findings, Nick Howat, Head of Social and Political Attitudes at TNS BMRB said;"We know that police budgets are going to come under increasing strain over the next few years with forces across the country needing to make substantial savings. Increasing the role of private companies is one way that forces could seek to do more with less but they should be aware that there is real public concern about taking traditional police services out of public hands and entrusting them to private firms."