

DEATH PENALTY

Support for Death Penalty in U.S. Surges After Boston Bombings

Three-in-five Americans believe capital punishment is the preferable approach to punish convicted murderers.

[NEW YORK – Apr. 29, 2013] – The proportion of Americans who favor capital punishment increased dramatically this month, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

In the online survey of a representative national sample of 1,008 American adults, 78 per cent of respondents (+8 since [September 2011](#)) support the possibility of prosecutors relying on the death penalty for murder cases in the United States.

The poll was conducted after the Boston Marathon bombings and concluded before the massive manhunt that resulted in the arrest of one of the suspects.

Respondents in the South (80%) and West (79%) are more likely to endorse capital punishment, along with supporters of the Republican Party (86%).

Most Americans who favor capital punishment think the penalty fits the crime in murder cases (68%), believe it saves taxpayers money and the costs associated with having murderers in prison (52%), and serves as a deterrent for potential murderers (also 52%).

Conversely, opponents of the death penalty are chiefly concerned about the possibility of executing a person who has been wrongly convicted (71%).

KEY FINDINGS

- **78% (+8 since 2011) support the possibility of prosecutors relying on the death penalty for murder cases**
- **59% (+3) prefer the death penalty for convicted murderers; 25% (-2) choose life imprisonment**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From April 15 to April 16, 2013, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,008 American adults who are Springboard America panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of the United States. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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When given two options to deal with convicted murderers, three-in-five Americans (59%) prefer the death penalty, while one-in-four (25%) would choose life imprisonment. Republicans (68%) are more likely to select capital punishment on this question than Independents (60%) and Democrats (49%).

A majority of Americans (64%) believe that the death penalty is sometimes appropriate, while 22 per cent deem it always appropriate. Only nine per cent of respondents think capital punishment is never appropriate.

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[Angus Reid Public Opinion](#) is a public affairs practice headed by Dr. Angus Reid: an industry visionary who has spent more than four decades asking questions to figure out what people feel, how they think and who they will vote for. A team of talented and experienced practitioners with a unique and profound understanding of global issues conduct high quality research throughout the world on a daily basis for corporations, governments, academic researchers, and non-profit organizations.

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**For more information, please contact
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Death Penalty

Next, we'd like to ask you some questions about the death penalty. Which of these statements comes closest to your own point of view about the death penalty?

	Region				
	Total	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
The death penalty is always appropriate	22%	19%	20%	22%	27%
The death penalty is sometimes appropriate	64%	71%	68%	62%	60%
The death penalty is never appropriate	9%	7%	7%	10%	10%
Not sure	5%	3%	5%	6%	3%

Death Penalty

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	Party ID			
	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
The death penalty is always appropriate	22%	16%	28%	22%
The death penalty is sometimes appropriate	64%	66%	63%	67%
The death penalty is never appropriate	9%	12%	6%	7%
Not sure	5%	6%	3%	4%

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Death Penalty

As you may know, many countries around the world have abolished the death penalty, but not the United States. All things considered, do you support or oppose the possibility of prosecutors relying on the death penalty for murder cases in the United States?

	Region				
	Total	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Support	78%	75%	77%	80%	79%
Oppose	16%	19%	18%	13%	18%
Not sure	5%	5%	4%	7%	3%

Death Penalty

As you may know, many countries around the world have abolished the death penalty, but not the United States. All things considered, do you support or oppose the possibility of prosecutors relying on the death penalty for murder cases in the United States?

	Party ID			
	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Support	78%	72%	86%	78%
Oppose	16%	20%	12%	18%
Not sure	5%	8%	3%	5%

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Death Penalty

To respondents who support – Why do you support the possibility of prosecutors relying on the death penalty for murder cases in the United States? Select all that apply.

	United States
A convicted murderer has taken a life, so the death penalty fits the crime	68%
The death penalty saves taxpayers money and the costs associated with having murderers in prison	52%
The death penalty serves as a deterrent for potential murderers	52%
The death penalty provides closure to the families of murder victims	49%
Murderers cannot be rehabilitated	26%
None of these	3%

Death Penalty

To respondents who oppose – Why do you oppose the possibility of prosecutors relying on the death penalty for murder cases in the United States? Select all that apply.

	United States
A person may be wrongly convicted, and then executed	71%
Even if a convicted murderer has taken a life, it is wrong to take the murderer's own life as punishment	44%
The death penalty does not serve as a deterrent for potential murderers	43%
Murderers should do their time in prison, as indicated by a judge	43%
Murderers can be rehabilitated	16%
None of these	5%

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Death Penalty

All things considered, which of these two approaches would you prefer as a punishment for convicted murderers in the United States?

	Region				
	Total	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
The death penalty	59%	59%	57%	59%	60%
Life imprisonment	25%	27%	30%	22%	25%
Not sure	16%	14%	13%	19%	14%

Death Penalty

All things considered, which of these two approaches would you prefer as a punishment for convicted murderers in the United States?

	Party ID			
	Total	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
The death penalty	59%	49%	68%	60%
Life imprisonment	25%	35%	19%	22%
Not sure	16%	16%	13%	18%

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