

Death Penalty Doesn't Deter Crime

"The view that the death penalty deters is still the product of belief, not evidence ... on balance, the evidence suggests that the death penalty may increase the murder rate ... in light of this evidence, is it wise to spend millions on a process with no demonstrated value that creates at least some risk of executing innocents when other proven crime-fighting measures exist?"

-John Donohue (Yale University) and Justin Wolfers (University of Pennsylvania)

"The Death Penalty: No Evidence for Deterrence"

We've learned a lot about the death penalty in the last 30 years. It does not deter crime. It actually makes us less safe by siphoning resources from programs that do reduce crime. Moreover, a growing number of law enforcement officials now believe in better ways to keep us safe.

Capital Punishment Can Hold No Deterrent Value

- At its core, murder is a crime of passion. One does not consider the consequence of the death penalty while in the midst of a violent crime.
- Most murders occur under the influence of drugs or alcohol, further revealing that the consequence of the death penalty can have no deterrent effect.
- The National Research Council reviewed more than three decades of research and **found no credible evidence that the death penalty deters crime.**ⁱ
- A 2009 study found that 88% of the nation's top criminologists believe the death penalty is not a deterrent.ⁱⁱ Nearly two-thirds of the American people agree, according to recent polling.

Data Shows the Death Penalty Does Not Lower Murder Rates

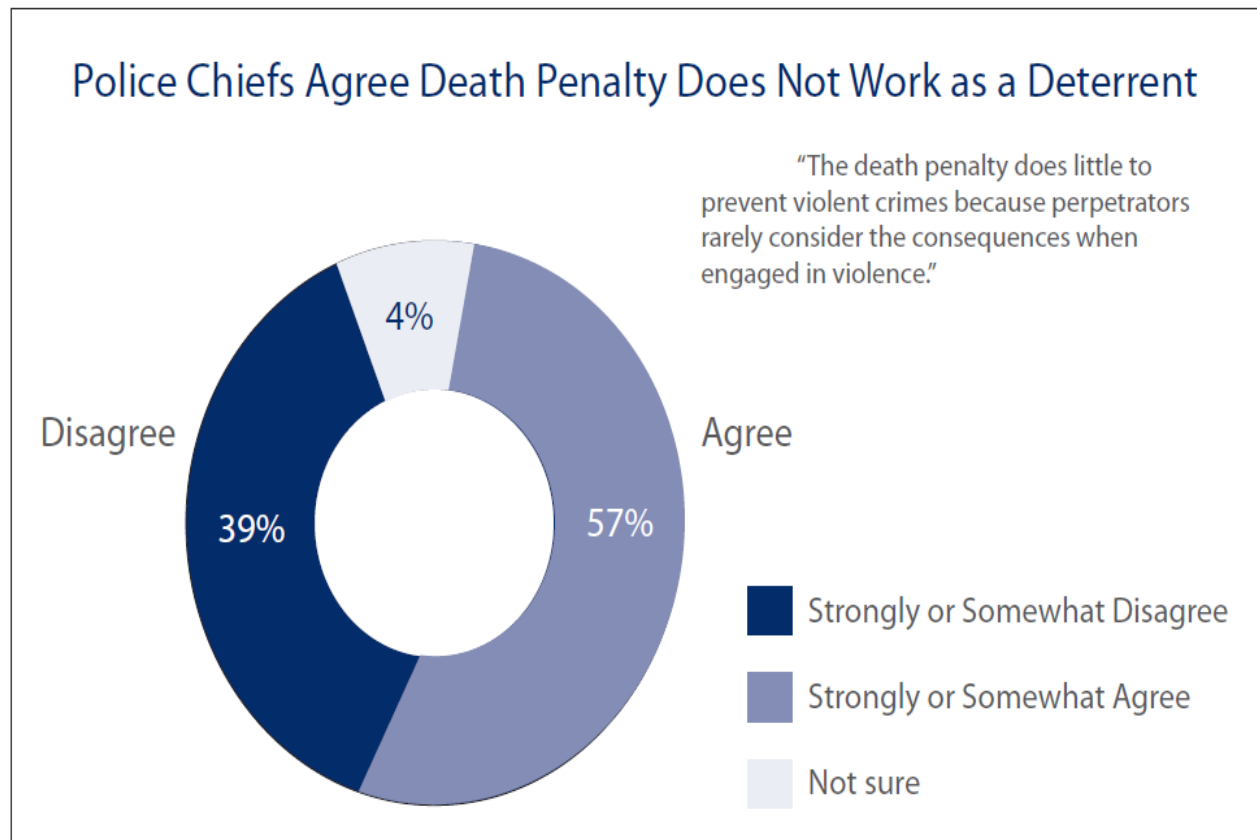
- The majority of studies find that the death penalty has no deterrent effect above the alternative sentence of life in prison without release. The studies that do find a deterrent effect have not stood up to peer review, and suffer from faulty measurement, missing data, failure to account for key variables, or other statistical flaws.ⁱⁱⁱ
- A simple comparison reveals that states without the death penalty actually have lower murder rates than those with the death penalty. The murder rate in states with the death penalty is 4.7, while the murder rate drops to 3.1 in states with the death penalty.^{iv}
- **Homicide rates of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty are lower in states without the death penalty.** None of the six states which have recently ended their use of the death penalty have seen an increase in murders of law enforcement officers.

- The experience of individual states confirms the data. The murder rate in Manhattan dropped steadily for ten years even though the District Attorney there opposed the death penalty and refused to seek it. Chicago’s murder rate dropped by nearly a third during the first seven years the state suspended executions.^v

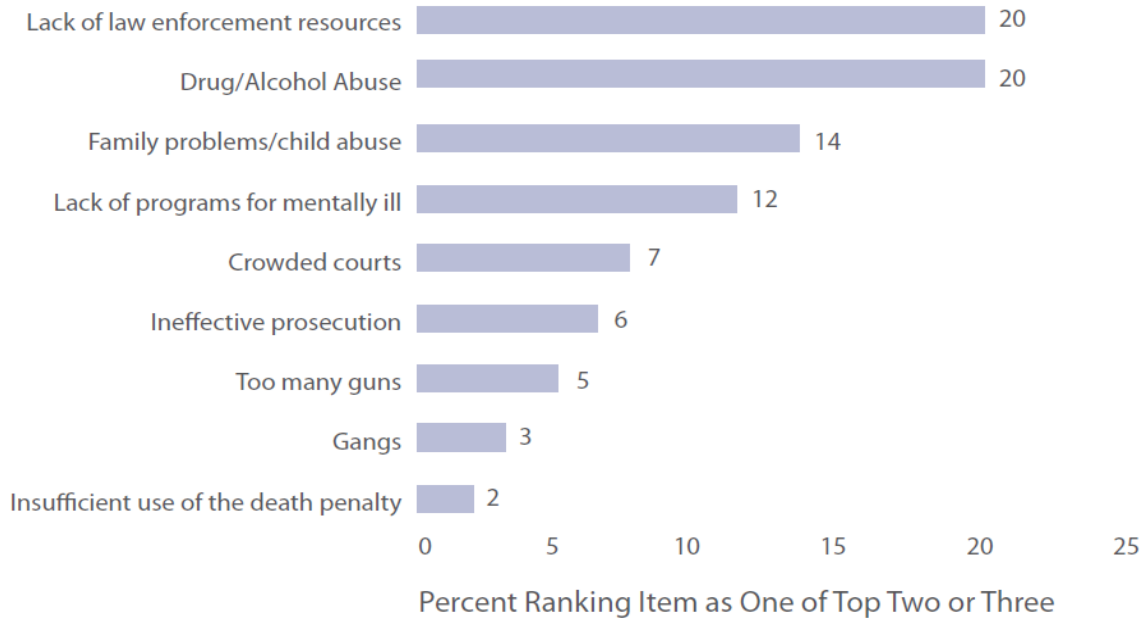
What Police Chiefs Say

Even police officers do not believe the death penalty is an effective deterrent.

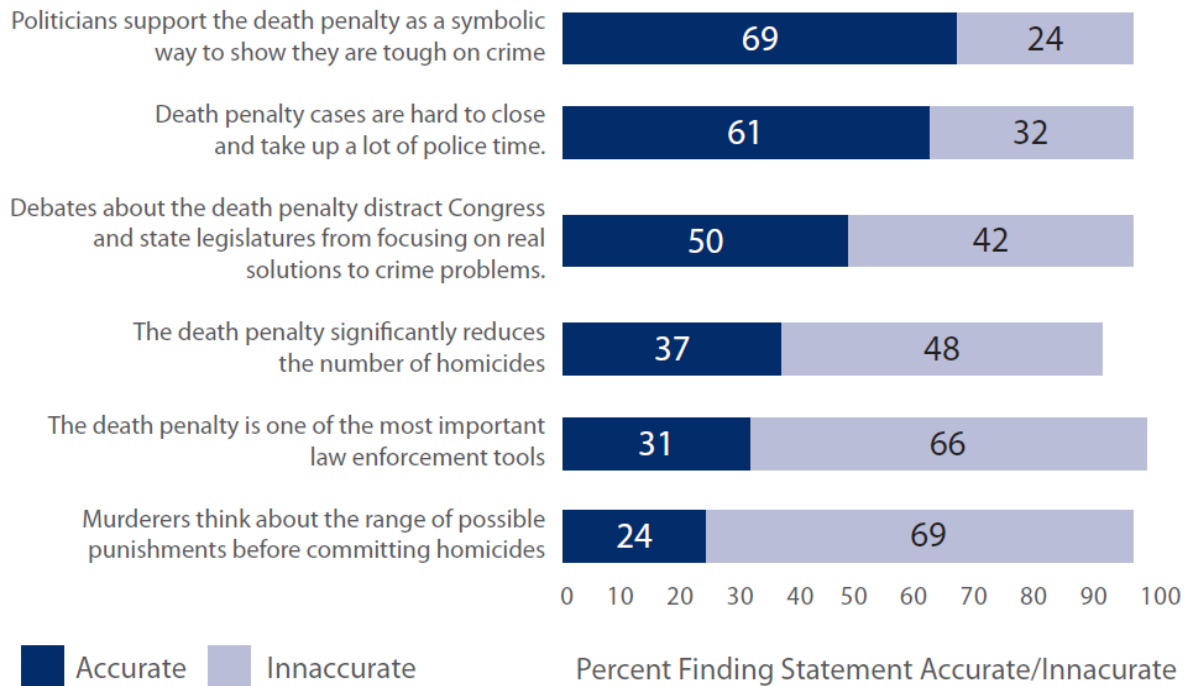
- In a national survey, police chiefs ranked the death penalty last among effective ways to reduce violent crime. The financial costs associated with the death penalty siphons resources from effective tools that actually prevent violent crimes.
- 99% of respondents said that other changes such as reducing drug abuse or improving the economy were more important than expanding the death penalty in reducing violent crime.^{vi}
- Many law enforcement officers say the death penalty is a distraction from their goal of public safety.



What Interferes with Effective Law Enforcement?



Police Chiefs' Views



ⁱ D. Nagin and J. Pepper, "Deterrence and the Death Penalty," Committee on Law and Justice at the National Research Council, April 2012

ⁱⁱ Gallup Polling, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1606/death-penalty.aspx>>

ⁱⁱⁱ John Donohue and Justin Wolfers, "The Death Penalty: No Evidence for Deterrence," *The Economists' Voice*, April 2006

^{iv} DPIC, "Murder Rates Nationally and by State," <<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/murder-rates-nationally-and-state>>

^v "Homicide at low for state since 1975", Associated Press. January 30, 2012

^{vi} DPIC, "Smart On Crime," <<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/CostsRptFinal.pdf>>