YEAR END REPORT 24
Public Opinion

Death Penalty Information Center

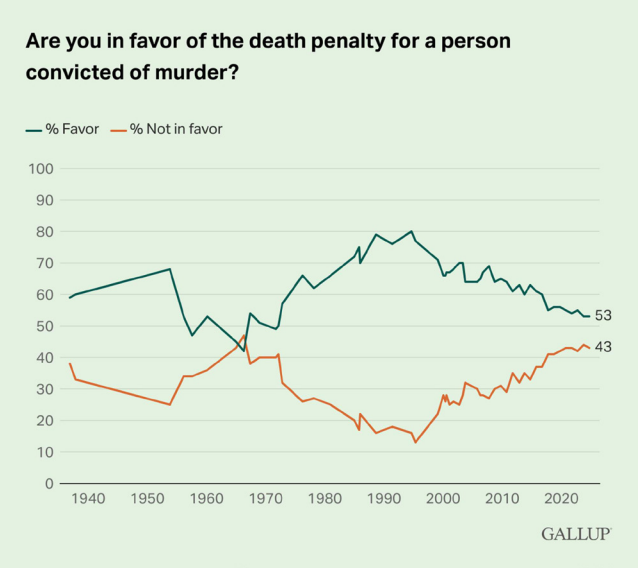
Public support for the death penalty remains at a five-decade low (53%) and recent Gallup polling reveals that more than half of young U.S. adults ages 18 through 43 now oppose the death penalty. Fewer people found the death penalty morally acceptable this year (55%) than last year (60%).

National Polling Shows Public Support at Five-Decade Low

According to October 2024 polling by Gallup, support for the death penalty remains at a five-decade low in the United States. Overall, Gallup found 53% of Americans in favor of the death penalty, but that number masks considerable differences between older and younger Americans. More than half of young adults aged 18 to 43 now oppose the death penalty.

Among those expressing a political affiliation, support for the death penalty fell markedly in all groups and in all generations, with the exception of Republicans aged sixty and older, where support for the death penalty rose by 2%. Public support of the death penalty peaked thirty years ago, in 1994, when 80% of Americans said they favored the death penalty for a person convicted of murder.

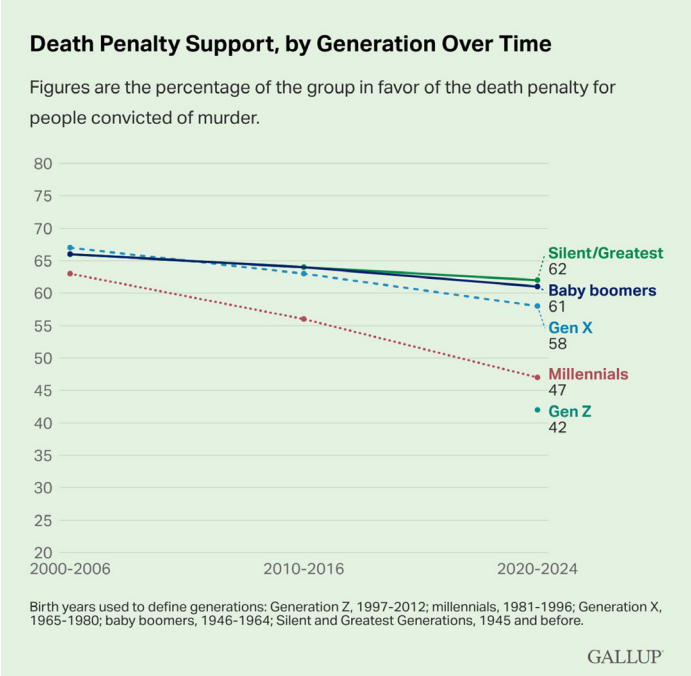
A generational divide in Gallup's polling results also shows that more than half of young U.S. adults — millennials and Generation Z, ages 18 through 43 — oppose the death penalty,



while approximately six in ten adults among the older generations — Silent Generation, Generation X, and baby boomers — favor the death penalty.

This generational gap has been widening every year for the past 20 years, according to Gallup. Since 2000, support for the death penalty among millennials (ages 28 to 43) has fallen 25%.

Gallup only began collecting data on Gen Z over the past four years, but the spread between Gen Z and all other age groups is striking — 58% of Gen Z oppose the death penalty, compared to only 38% of baby boomers and the so-called "Silent Generation" (which together comprise all those 60 years and older). Support for the death penalty also fell among this older cohort, but only by about 6% since 2000.



The divide between supporters of the two major political parties shows an erosion of support for the death penalty among Democrats, Independents, and younger Republicans. Support for the death penalty has remained stable among older Republicans over the past 25 years, but support for the death penalty among Democrats 60 years old and older has fallen 11% since 2016.

Support for the death penalty among younger Democrats dropped even further — 18% since 2016. Among older Republicans, support for the death penalty increased slightly (the only group in the Gallup poll to show an increase in support) while support among younger Republicans fell slightly, by 4%.

The trend among Independents followed that of Democrats generally, but was not as marked, with support for the death penalty among older Independents falling by 6% and among younger Independents by 10%.

Gallup's Moral Issues Survey, administered in May 2024, noted a drop in the number of Americans who find the death penalty morally acceptable: only 55% of Americans now believe the death penalty is morally acceptable, down 8% from the previous year, while 39% of respondents said the death penalty is morally unacceptable, up 15% from 2023. Moral support of the death penalty peaked in 2006, at 76%. State Polling Shows Majority Support for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.

State Polling Shows Majority Support for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

A St. Louis University and YouGov annual poll, administered in February 2024 of 900 likely Missouri voters, found a majority (52%) of respondents in favor of Missouri Governor Michael Parson commuting all death sentence to life in prison without parole.

This support is noteworthy in light of the fact that a majority of respondents said they still generally favor the death penalty (62%) in cases of first-degree murder.

Respondents who identified as Republican expressed more support for the death penalty in cases of first-degree murder compared to those who identified as Democrat and Independent. While 86% of Republican respondents were in favor, only 37% of Democrats and 58% of Independents expressed the same view.

A January 2024 report on the results of a 2023 poll similarly revealed that a majority of Ohio voters prefer prison sentences over the death penalty. The Tarrance Group reported that 56% of respondents favor replacing the death penalty with life imprisonment without parole, and 57% identify life imprisonment as the preferred punishment for first-degree murder.

Additionally, 56% of respondents support legislation for Ohio Governor Mike DeWine (R) to replace the death penalty with life without parole, and the same amount express concern over the risk of executing an innocent person. There have been 11 innocent people in Ohio exonerated after being wrongly convicted and sentenced to death in the modern death penalty era. These findings suggest critical public support for a bill introduced by Ohio State Representative Jean Schmidt (R), Representative Adam C. Miller (D), and 13 co-sponsors to abolish the death penalty in Ohio.