

## **After Decades of Favoring the Death Penalty, Americans are Torn on How to Punish Murder**

In Gallup's most recent poll on crime, 53% of people interviewed said they favored the death penalty, 43% said they opposed it and 4% had no opinion. Levels like this have not been seen since the 1960s and 1970s. So, what changed over the years?

When Gallup began this poll in 1936, support for the death penalty was 59%. Support for the death penalty reached an all-time low in 1966, with just 42% in favor. However, support bounced back and peaked in 1994 with 80% in favor. Since then, support for the death penalty has decreased. It has hovered in the mid-50s since 2017.

According to Gallup's Public Release Date, the majority of those favoring the death penalty politically identify as Republican --- 77% to be exact. Additionally, the majority of those favoring the death penalty also have some college education, a high school diploma or less --- 59% and 65% respectively. Those in favor of the death penalty typically believe in retribution and justice. They believe the death penalty serves as a deterrent against future murders. So, how did this change?

Those opposing the death penalty often cite the risk of executing innocents, which the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) actively advocates for. According to the ACLU, over 160 individuals on death row have been exonerated using DNA evidence. The death penalty has a high risk of fatal errors. These individuals are likely Democrats, as 66% of Democrats oppose the death penalty. These individuals are also educated, with 56% of those opposing the death penalty being college graduates.

The decline in favor of the death penalty over the years has brought this issue to a deadlock. Americans are torn on what to do, but they will be forced to decide: Will they let the death penalty kill, or will they kill it?