



Fact Sheet: Deterrence

THE DEATH PENALTY HAS NO BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON MURDER RATES:

"I have inquired for most of my adult life about studies that might show that the death penalty is a deterrent. And I have not seen any research that would substantiate that point.">

- U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno (January 21, 2000)

- Recent studies in Oklahoma and California failed to find that capital punishment had a deterrent effect on violent crime and, in fact, found a significant increase in stranger killings and homicide rates after the death penalty had been reinstated. (William Bailey, "Deterrence, Brutalization, and the Death Penalty," Criminology, 1998; Ernie Thompson, "Effects of an Execution on Homicides in California." Homicide Studies, 1999)
- The murder rate in Canada has dropped by 40% since the death penalty was abolished in that country in 1976. (Amnesty International)
- A Texas study determined in 1999 that there was no relation between the number of executions and murder rates in general. (Victoria Brewer, Robert Wrinkle, John Sorenson and James Marquart)
- A New York Times survey demonstrated that homicide rate in states with capital punishment have been 48% to 101% higher than those without the death penalty. (Raymond Bonner and Ford Fessenden, "Absence of Executions," New York Times, September 22, 2000)
- The five countries with the highest homicide rates that do not impose the death penalty average 21.6 murders per 100,000 people. The five countries with the highest homicide rate that do impose the death penalty average 41.6 murders for every 100,000 people. (United Nations Development Program)

THOSE WHO COMMIT MURDER DO NOT CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS:

"I am not convinced that capital punishment, in and of itself, is a deterrent to crime because most people do not think about the death penalty before they commit a violent or capital crime."

- Willie L. Williams, Police Chief, Los Angeles, CA

- Most people who commit murders either do not expect to be caught or do not carefully weigh the differences between a possible execution and life in prison before they act.
- Murders are most often committed in moments of blinding anger or passion, or by people who are substance abusers and act impulsively.

AUTHORITIES RECOGNIZE THAT CAPITAL PUNISHMENT DOES NOT DETER CRIME:

"Take it from someone who has spent a career in federal and state law enforcement, enacting the death penalty . . . would be a grave mistake. Prosecutors must reveal the dirty little secret they too often share only among themselves: The death penalty actually hinders the fight against crime."

- Robert M. Morgenthau, District Attorney, Manhattan, NY

- 84% of current and former presidents of the country's top academic criminological societies reject the notion that research shows any deterrent effect from the death penalty. (Michael L. Radelet, Ronald L. Akers, Northern Illinois University)
- 2 out of every 3 law enforcement officers do not believe that capital punishment decreases the rate of homicides. (Death Penalty Information Center)