

OREGONIANS FOR ALTERNATIVES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

Does the Death Penalty Prevent More Murders?

Academic and professional researchers and institutions over the years have disagreed on this subject. In 2012, the National Academies National Research Council, the most respected independent research organization in the land, examined three decades of research and concluded that the research is not useful. “The committee concludes that research to date on the effect of capital punishment on homicide is not informative about whether capital punishment decreases, increases or has no effect on homicide rates”. This learned conclusion differs from those who argue that the death penalty is a deterrent to violent crime and murder. (1)

In the 2010 Smart on Crime survey of 500 law enforcement executives, the majority of police chiefs and sheriffs concluded that the death penalty is not a deterrent. (2)

In another study, conducted by Prof. Michael Radelet, of the University of Colorado, 88% of the top criminologists in the country do not believe the death penalty acts as a deterrent to homicide. Additionally, 87% believe abolition of the death penalty would have no significant effect on murder rates.

- Federal Bureau of Investigation comparisons of states with and without the death penalty show that those states without a death penalty consistently have lower murder rates per 100,000 population than those states that have a death penalty.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
With DP	5.70	5.82	5.82	5.91	5.71	5.87	5.90	5.87	5.72	5.26	5.00
W/O DP	4.25	4.25	4.27	4.10	4.02	4.03	4.22	4.10	4.05	3.90	4.01
%Dif	34%	37%	36%	44%	42%	46%	40%	43%	41%	35%	25%

What About Oregon?

Compared with other death penalty and non death penalty states Oregon’s murder rate, per 100,000 population has remained consistently low. Although Oregon does have the death penalty in law, it has only executed two inmates since 1962. Both inmates relinquished their appeals. Since it has not been shown that the death penalty deters murders, the death penalty does not seem to be a factor in Oregon.

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
2.0	2.4	2.0	1.9	2.5	2.2	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.4

Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Statistics. <http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/crimestats>

- (1) Source: Deterrence and the Death Penalty, April 18, 2012, THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES National Research Council, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Committee on Law and Justice, Committee on Deterrence and the Death Penalty
- (2) “Smart on Crime: Reconsidering the Death Penalty in a Time of Economic Crisis. 2009. National poll of Police Chiefs, from the Death Penalty Information Center.