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press release

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Support for the death penalty declining in Arizona

Public support for capital punishment is dropping, according to a new poll conducted by the Behavior Research Center for the Arizona Death Penalty Forum.

The results were based on a telephone poll of 800 people, statewide, during March. The margin of error is 3.5 percent.

Heads of households were asked:

“Do you favor or oppose use of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?”

Those who did not outright oppose the death penalty were also asked:

“If it is certain that a sentence of life in prison without parole would mean a prisoner truly would never leave prison, would you favor or oppose life in prison without parole instead of the death penalty for those convicted of murder?”

The same questions were asked in July 2000. Comparing the results show:

- The outright support for the death penalty is 56 percent; down from 64 percent in 2000.
- Outright opposition to the death penalty is 22 percent; up from 20 percent.
- Qualified support for the death penalty (“Depends on Circumstances”) is 16 percent; up from 10 percent.
- People who are “not sure” are at 12 percent, up from 7 percent.
- When given the option of life-without-parole, outright support for the death penalty drops to 41 percent. This reading is down from 46 percent in 2000.

“These results suggest that Arizona is joining other states in questioning whether death penalty is a valid public policy,” said Eleanor Eisenberg, president of the Arizona Death Penalty Forum. “There has been a significant increase in the number of people who say they aren’t sure and ‘it depends,’ so it appears people are having second thoughts about executions.”

This poll will be among the topics at a day-long seminar, “Perspectives on the Death Penalty,” on Saturday, April 14, at Arizona State University. Speakers representing the prosecution, the defense, the judiciary and victims will be talking about their views of capital punishment.

The public and news media are invited to attend.

Included is a detailed summary of the poll results and flyer about the upcoming conference. Ms. Eisenberg is available for further comment.

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This ConsumerTRACK survey conducted for The Arizona Death Penalty Forum is based on 800 telephone interviews conducted with Arizona heads-of-household. All of the interviewing on this study was conducted by professional interviewers of the Behavior Research Center during March 2007. The margin of error for this survey is +/-3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level.

TOPLINE FINDINGS

- Fifty-six percent of Arizona residents indicate they support the death penalty while 22 percent indicate they oppose it. An additional 16 percent of residents say they support the death penalty under certain circumstances. The outright support figure of 56 percent is down from 64 percent in July, 2000. (TABLE 1)
- The highest outright support for the death penalty is found among Republicans (70%), males (64%) and residents 55 or older (61%). Conversely, opposition to the death penalty is highest among residents under 35 (27%), political Independents (26%) and females (24%). (TABLE 2)
- When the 78 percent of residents who do not oppose the death penalty are asked to indicate if they would favor or oppose life in prison without parole instead of the death penalty for those convicted of murder, we find that 53 percent prefer the death penalty and 30 percent prefer life without parole. (TABLE 3)
- If response to the two questions is summarized, outright support for the death penalty drops to 41 percent. This reading is down from 46 percent in 2000. (TABLE 4)

TABLE 1: ATTITUDE ABOUT DEATH PENALTY

“Do you favor or oppose use of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?”

	March 2007	July 2000
Favor	56%	64%
Oppose	22	20
Depends on Circumstances	16	10
Not Sure	5	5
Refused	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100%	100%

TABLE 2: ATTITUDE ABOUT DEATH PENALTY – DETAIL

	Favor	Oppose	Depends On Circumstances	Not Sure	Refused
<u>TOTAL</u>	56%	22%	16%	5%	1%
<u>GENDER</u>					
Male	64	19	13	3	1
Female	47	24	20	8	1
<u>AGE</u>					
Under 35	48	27	16	8	1
35 to 54	56	21	18	4	1
55 or over	61	19	14	5	1
<u>AREA</u>					
Maricopa	55	21	18	4	2
Pima	53	23	14	9	1
Rural	57	22	15	6	*
<u>PARTY</u>					
Republican	70	17	10	3	0
Democrat	45	23	24	6	2
Other	52	26	14	7	1

* Indicates Percent Less Than .5

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TABLE 3: ATTITUDE ABOUT LIFE SENTENCE  
WITHOUT PAROLE (AMONG THOSE WHO DO NOT  
OPPOSE THE DEATH PENALTY)

“If it is certain that a sentence of life in prison without parole would mean a prisoner truly would never leave prison, would you favor or oppose life in prison without parole instead of the death penalty for those convicted of murder?”

|               | Favor | Oppose | Not<br>Sure | Refused |
|---------------|-------|--------|-------------|---------|
| <u>TOTAL</u>  | 30%   | 53%    | 15%         | 2%      |
| <u>GENDER</u> |       |        |             |         |
| Male          | 22    | 66     | 8           | 4       |
| Female        | 38    | 39     | 22          | 1       |
| <u>AGE</u>    |       |        |             |         |
| Under 35      | 33    | 52     | 13          | 2       |
| 35 to 54      | 31    | 54     | 13          | 2       |
| 55 or over    | 27    | 52     | 18          | 3       |
| <u>AREA</u>   |       |        |             |         |
| Maricopa      | 31    | 52     | 14          | 3       |
| Pima          | 28    | 53     | 18          | 1       |
| Rural         | 29    | 54     | 15          | 2       |
| <u>PARTY</u>  |       |        |             |         |
| Republican    | 25    | 59     | 16          | *       |
| Democrat      | 33    | 45     | 18          | 4       |
| Other         | 29    | 57     | 12          | 2       |

\* Indicates Percent Less Than .5

TABLE 4: DEATH PENALTY POSITION SUMMARY

|                                  | March<br>2007 | July<br>2000 |
|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Prefer Death Penalty             | 41%           | 46%          |
| Prefer Life Without<br>Parole    | 23            | 26           |
| Oppose Death Penalty<br>Outright | 22            | 20           |
| Not Sure                         | 12            | 7            |
| Refused                          | <u>2</u>      | <u>1</u>     |
|                                  | 100%          | 100%         |