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MAJORITY SUPPORT FOR THE DEATH PENALTY REMAINS IN NEW JERSEY

The death penalty has been in the news lately with a number of botched executions attracting the attention of the U.S. Supreme Court. Their decision may determine whether lethal injection violates the Eight Amendment banning cruel and unusual punishment, but if Garden State voters have their say, the death penalty will be here to stay. The most recent survey from Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind finds support for the death penalty virtually unchanged from when the same question was asked in 2006. Fifty-seven percent of respondents say they favor the death penalty for certain crimes with 36 percent opposed. In 2006, support measured 54 percent.

"It's not really a state issue, as New Jersey is among those states who abolished the death penalty in 2007. It's more of a federal issue, given the difficulty that many states are having in getting the drugs needed for the legal injection cocktail, said Krista Jenkins, director of PublicMind and professor of political science. "Right now Garden Staters are about where the nation is in regard to the question. Other polls have national support at 56 percent, another sign that New Jersey is really a microcosm of the rest of the nation."

Not everyone embraces this form of punishment: Support is the strongest among Republicans, whites, men, and Gen Xers — with clear majorities of all of these groups saying yes to the ultimate penalty. There is considerably less support among Democrats, people of color, women, and Millennials — all of whom oppose the death penalty in numbers almost reaching or exceeding a majority.

Partisanship and race are the two biggest dividers in attitudes toward the death penalty. Among whites, approval approaches two-thirds, but among blacks support plummets thirty points to 35 percent. Three-fourths of Republicans favor this form of punishment with fewer than half of all Democrats.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 1314 adults, including an oversample of 403 African-Americans, in New Jersey was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from April 13 through April 19. The margin of error is +/- 3 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Radio actualities at 201.692.2846

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Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from April 13 through April 19 using a randomly selected sample of 1314 adults in New Jersey, including an oversample of 403 African-Americans. Black respondents were identified through their response to the following question:

In addition to being American, would you say you're... ? [Prompt as necessary]

- 1 White [INTERVIEWER INCLUDE: Irish, German, Polish, Italian, and all Europeans]
- 2 African-American/black
- 3 Asian-American [INCLUDES: Indian, Pakistani, Indian, Arab, Chinese, Japanese, etc.]
- 4 Hispanic/Latin American
- 5 Other [vol]
- 9 Ref.

One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of +/- 3.3 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. The MoE for African Americans is +/- 4.9; for whites the MoE is +/- 4.3 (N = 524).

Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Tables

<i>In general, would you say you [rotate] favor or oppose the death penalty for certain crimes?</i>											
	PID				Gender		Race		Age		
	All	Dem	Ind	Rep	Male	Female	White	Black	18-34	35-59	60+
Favor	57%	45	52	76	64	51	65	35	48	61	60
Oppose	36%	50	40	18	30	42	30	56	46	33	33
DK (vol)	5%	4	6	5	4	6	4	6	6	5	5
Refused (vol)	1%	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2

<i>In general, would you say you [rotate] favor or oppose the death penalty for certain crimes?</i>						
		Education		Region		
	All	College Grad +	Some College and Less	North	Central	South
Favor	57%	60	54	52	60	62
Oppose	36%	34	39	40	36	30
DK (vol)	5%	5	5	7	2	6
Refused (vol)	1%	1	2	2	1	1

Sample Characteristics

Gender	<i>Male</i>	48%
	<i>Female</i>	52%
Age	<i>18-34</i>	28%
	<i>35-59</i>	41%
	<i>60+</i>	31%
	<i>Refused</i>	1%
Race	<i>White</i>	61%
	<i>African American</i>	14%
	<i>Hispanic</i>	14%
	<i>Asian</i>	6%
	<i>Other/Refused</i>	4%
Party (with leaners)	<i>Dem</i>	41%
	<i>Ind/DK/Refused</i>	27%
	<i>Repub</i>	31%