



# DEATH PENALTY IN THE U.S. QUIZ



1. After the Supreme Court's ruling in *Gregg v. Georgia* in 1976, the death penalty was resumed in many U.S. states. Since the decision, what percentage of executions have taken place in the South?
  - A. 35%
  - B. 50%
  - C. 80%
  - D. 95%
2. With the death penalty, California's justice system costs about \$137 million annually. If the death penalty was abolished and the maximum penalty became life in prison, how much would California save every year?
  - A. CA would lose \$20 million
  - B. CA would save \$50 million
  - C. CA would save \$125 million
  - D. CA would save \$200 million
3. Death penalty states consistently have higher homicide rates than non-death penalty states. In 2007, the difference in homicide rates between death penalty and non-death penalty states was:
  - A. Less than 25%
  - B. About 40-45%
  - C. About 60%
  - D. Greater than 60%
4. How many inmates to date have been exonerated from death row as a result of new evidence?
  - A. 34
  - B. 77
  - C. 131
5. In Alabama, only 6% of murders have involved an African American offender and a Caucasian victim. What percentage of African Americans on Alabama's death row are there for killing a Caucasian victim?
  - A. 6%
  - B. 10%
  - C. 25%
  - D. 60%
6. 59 countries around the world exercise the death penalty written in law. However, this differs from their actual practices. How many of these 59 countries actively use the death penalty?
  - A. 25
  - B. 36
  - C. 40
7. Lethal injection is the primary method of execution in the U.S. The convict is given a dosages of two or three drugs, which ultimately kill them. What potential problems are there in using this method?
  - A. Severe pain for the prisoner
  - B. Problems finding a vein
  - C. Unexpected drug effects
  - D. All of the above
8. Only about 5% of inmates on death row can afford to pay for their own attorney. For defendants who spent more than \$320,000 on their representation in federal death cases, which of the following is true?
  - A. These defendants were always involved in a race-motivated murder
  - B. These defendants were twice as likely to avoid capital punishment than those who spent less
  - C. These defendants were all involved with gang-related crimes
9. Which of the following countries exercises the death penalty?
  - A. China
  - B. Iran
  - C. Saudi Arabia
  - D. All of the above
10. What is the aim of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights?
  - A. To punish with death those who commit heinous crimes
  - B. To ultimately abolish the death penalty
  - C. To guarantee adequate public defenders in capital cases



# DEATH PENALTY IN THE U.S. QUIZ ANSWERS



1. C – 80%.<sup>1</sup> This shows that a lot depends on where a crime is committed – perhaps more so than the nature of the crime that was committed. A triple homicide in Wisconsin will likely get life in prison (where there is no death penalty), whereas the same crime in Florida will probably call for the death penalty. This is an arbitrary and unfair distribution of punishment.
2. C – CA would save \$125 million (every year).<sup>2</sup> If the system were changed to where the maximum sentence was life in prison, the annual cost of California’s justice system would be only \$11.5 million.<sup>3</sup> A recent study found that abolishing the death penalty in California would save \$1 billion over five years.<sup>4</sup> These figures are indicative of just how costly the death penalty is. Imagine what could be done with all that funding – improved education programs, better-equipped law enforcement, infrastructure improvements, etc.
3. B – 42%.<sup>5</sup> Since 1990 this difference has actually been increasing!<sup>6</sup> There is no proof that the death penalty deters crime, and in fact these homicide statistics correlate with the exact opposite notion. While it is doubtful that the death penalty causes murder, it certainly does not prevent it. If capital punishment doesn’t ward off criminal activity, what else does it do but get costly, inhumane revenge?
4. C – 131.<sup>7</sup> A number of former death row inmates have been exonerated and cleared of all charges. Some of this can be attributed to better forms of technology, such as DNA testing. However, no science is perfect (and DNA is not always available), and some defendants are being put on death row almost solely by eyewitness testimonies. This corruption of justice cannot be solved by simple technological improvements. Even if the system were revamped, there will always be the risk of executing an innocent, which is a price that is too high to pay.
5. D – 60%.<sup>8</sup> Ruth E. Friedman, Senior Attorney at Equal Justice Initiative, published in *Statistics and Death: The Conspicuous Role of Race Bias in the Administration of the Death Penalty* that 60% of African Americans on death row in Alabama were convicted of a crime that included a white victim,<sup>9</sup> even though black-on-white homicides constituted only 6% of all first degree murders committed in the state. This is the type of racial bias and subjectivity that persists in the administration of the death penalty.
6. A – 25%.<sup>10</sup> Although a number of countries around the world have laws that technically allow for capital punishment, not all of them actually use it in practice.<sup>11</sup> This is illustrative of an international trend away from the death penalty. Countries often consider capital punishment too costly, too difficult to consistently (non-arbitrarily) administer, or simply inhumane. The death penalty remains “on the books” either for extreme circumstances, or because lawmakers simply have not made the mere formality of removing it a high priority.
7. D – All of the above. There are numerous problems with lethal injection, which makes it such an inhumane procedure. Some prisoners may have been former drug users. This makes their veins difficult to locate and insert a needle into, leading to a longer, more inhumane execution. Bennie Demps, who was executed in 2000, claimed he was “butchered” and “bleeding profusely” as a result of technicians failing to find adequate veins.<sup>12</sup> Lethal injection can also be painful if the drugs do not work as planned. The first drug administered is an anesthetic, which puts the patient to sleep. The second drug immobilizes the prisoner and stops breathing. The third (some states exclude this drug) stops the heart. If the anesthetic fails, the second drug may still immobilize the prisoner, which means that when the third, excruciatingly painful drug is administered, the prisoner may still be conscious but unable to move.<sup>13</sup> Lethal injection’s ability to “mask pain” renders it outright inhumane – In fact the second, immobilizing drug is banned from use for animal euthanasia.<sup>14</sup>
8. B – These defendants were twice as likely to avoid death row than those who spent less.<sup>15</sup> Many defendants charged with capital crimes cannot afford their own attorneys and are given court-appointed counsel. However, it is often the case that court-appointed lawyers are uninformed, inexperienced, and under-resourced. Some are simply incompetent. In fact, over the past twenty years, 20% of Washington state convicts who faced the death penalty had attorneys who were or had been “disbarred, suspended, or arrested.”<sup>16</sup> Such figures may account for why the majority of death row inmates were represented by court-appointed counsel, and why many who could afford their own attorneys successfully dodged a death sentence.
9. D – All of the above.<sup>17</sup> That’s right – the United States is in league with some notorious human rights violators. Meanwhile, other strong democracies “that share our political and cultural traditions “(especially those in Europe) are dropping the death penalty and pushing for world-wide abolition.<sup>18</sup>
10. B – To ultimately abolish the death penalty.<sup>19</sup> The Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is an international treaty that seeks to abolish the death penalty in its member states. It has 74 members. Members include essentially all of Europe, Australia, parts of South America and Southern Africa, Canada, and Mexico - but the United States is not a member.<sup>20</sup>

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