

Study examines death penalty support in Mexico

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In sharp contrast to previous studies of public support for the death penalty conducted in the U.S., Catholics in Mexico were found to be more likely to support capital punishment, while older Mexicans and those living in states that bordered the U.S. were less likely to support the death penalty, according to researchers at Sam Houston State University.

The study, "State- and Individual-level Predictors of Mexican Death Penalty Support," by Ph.D. Student Alexander H. Updegrave and Erin A. Orrick, an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University, was recently published by *Crime & Delinquency*. It sheds new light on Mexican citizens' attitudes toward the [death penalty](#), which could affect support for the death [penalty](#) in Texas as the Latino population continues to grow through immigration.

There are currently 9.5 million Latinos living Texas, with nearly nine out of 10 possessing Mexican heritage, and the ethnic group is projected to be the largest single racial or ethnic population in the state by 2020. By 2042, Latinos are expected to represent the majority of the state's residents. Mexico has a strong history of opposing [capital punishment](#) on human rights grounds, but neighboring Texas is known as the "Death Penalty Capital of the World" because of the historical frequency of its executions.

The study was based on 1,328 responses from the Mexican Panel Study,

a major research project conducted before and after the country's 2012 general presidential election. Based on the sample, 67 percent of Mexicans support the death penalty compared to 61 percent of Americans who support capital [punishment](#) nationally. These numbers are artificially inflated, though, because the survey did not ask whether participants favored the death penalty over life imprisonment without the possibility of parole (LWOP). Studies in the U.S. that have examined death penalty support compared to LWOP generally find a level of death penalty support below 50 percent.

The study found that, contrary to research conducted in the U.S., younger Mexican Catholics are more likely to support the death penalty than older, non-Catholic Mexicans. A geographical variation in death penalty support also was found, with Mexicans from states that bordered the U.S. less likely to support the death penalty (despite living in states with a higher average homicide rate and general unrest) than Mexicans living in states that did not border the U.S. In previous U.S. studies, those in areas with higher homicide rates were more likely to support capital punishment.

In addition, the study found Catholics in Mexico are more likely to support the death penalty. Previous research has shown that Catholics in the U.S. are less likely to support capital punishment. With a full 85 percent of Mexicans identifying as Catholics, this may translate into greater initial support for the [death](#) penalty upon immigration to the U.S., although that support is likely to decrease as immigrants become more assimilated. Finally, the study found younger Mexicans are more likely to [support](#) capital punishment.

"State- and Individual-level Predictors of Mexican Death Penalty Support," is available at *Crime & Delinquency*.

More information: "State- and Individual-level Predictors of Mexican

Death Penalty Support," [journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/...
177/0011128716686394](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0011128716686394)

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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