

Does Death Penalty Save Lives? A New Debate

NY Times

Nov 18, 2007

死刑, 台灣

- 蔡任內首次執行死刑, 2018.8.31
- 廢除死刑推動聯盟

The question

- Whether the death penalty deters murders
- ... captured the attention of scholars in law and economics

The Studies by economists

- Compare the number of executions in different jurisdictions with homicide rates over time
- ... murder rates tend to fall as executions rise.

Research shows

- Naci Mocan, an economist at Louisiana State University
- “I personally am opposed to the death penalty ...”
- “But my research shows that there is a deterrent effect.”

Deterrence

- Justin Wolfers, an economist at the University of Pennsylvania, “The existing evidence for deterrence is surprisingly fragile.”
- Gary Becker, Nobel Prize in economics in 1992, “the evidence of a variety of types — not simply the quantitative evidence — has been enough to convince me that capital punishment does deter and is worth using for the worst sorts of offenses.”

Cost

- To economists, it is obvious that if the cost of an activity rises, the amount of the activity will drop.
- Joanna M. Shepherd, "I am definitely against the death penalty on lots of different grounds ... But I do believe that people respond to incentives"