

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

# Americans, Britons and Canadians Take Harsh Stance on Crime

*Respondents in both Britain and Canada express would bring back the death penalty to punish people convicted of murder.*

[TORONTO - Jan. 22, 2010] - People in the United States, Britain and Canada are in agreement in their assessment of some aspects of crime legislation—including rehabilitation and prevention—but a large proportion of respondents voice support for applying the death penalty for murder convictions, a new Angus Reid Public Opinion poll has found.

The online survey of representative national samples found that at least three-in-five respondents in each one of the countries surveyed (63% in Britain, 67% in the U.S. and 65% in Canada) believe that when lawmakers set mandatory minimum sentences, they are getting tough on crime and sending a message to criminals.

### Views on Sentencing

A majority of respondents in the three countries (74% in Britain, 57% in the U.S. and 62% in Canada) think long prison sentences are the most powerful way to reduce crime.

While Americans are clearly convinced that a person who commits a relatively minor crime may be punished too severely because of mandatory minimum sentences (72%), agreement with this notion is lower in both Britain (57%) and Canada (55%).

### KEY FINDINGS

- **59% of Britons, 56% of Americans and 44% of Canadians think the crime rates in their respective countries have risen in the last five years**
- **84% of Americans, 67% of Britons and 62% of Canadians support punishing murderers with the death penalty**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

*From August 13 to August 16, 2009 Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,001 Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panellists, 1,004 American adults who are Springboard America panellists, and 1,049 British adults who are Springboard UK panellists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1% for all three countries. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Canada, the US and Great Britain. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.*

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More than three-quarters of respondents in the three countries agree that trying to rehabilitate people who have committed crimes is an important part of preventing crime, and want their criminal justice system to focus, above else, on preventing crime before it occurs.

### **Perceptions on Crime Rates**

A majority of respondents in Britain (59%) and the United States (56%) say that, to the best of their knowledge, crime rates in their country have increased on the last five years. This view is shared by 44 per cent of Canadians. However, one-in-four respondents in Canada (26%) think crime rates have decreased in the past five years.

### **Punishment**

In the United States, where the death penalty can still be applied under specific guidelines in certain jurisdictions, 84 per cent of respondents support relying on capital punishment in cases of homicide. A majority of Americans also endorse the death penalty for rape (62%) and kidnapping (53%), while two-in-five (40%) would approve of its use in cases of armed robbery.

In Canada and Britain, where the death penalty for homicide was abolished in 1976 and 1969 respectively, more than 60 per cent of respondents support relying on capital punishment for murderers. The level of support for death penalty on other cases is considerably lower in both countries.




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**Crime and Punishment**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? –  
 "Strongly agree" and "Moderately agree" listed




	<b>CANADA</b> 	<b>UNITED STATES</b> 	<b>GREAT BRITAIN</b> 
<b>When lawmakers set mandatory minimum sentences, they are getting tough on crime and sending a message to criminals</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>A person who commits a relatively minor crime may be punished too severely because of mandatory minimum sentences</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>Long prison sentences are the most powerful way to reduce crime</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>I think trying to rehabilitate people who have committed crimes is an important part of preventing crime</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>I think our criminal justice system should focus, above else, on preventing crime before it occurs</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>91%</b>

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**Crime and Punishment**

To the best of your knowledge, have crime rates in the last five years in your country decreased, remained the same, or increased?




	<b>CANADA</b> 	<b>UNITED STATES</b> 	<b>GREAT BRITAIN</b> 
<b>Decreased</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Remain the same</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Increased</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>59%</b>

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**Crime and Punishment**

Would you support punishing each of the following crimes with the death penalty? –  
*"Yes" listed*

	<b>CANADA</b> 	<b>UNITED STATES</b> 	<b>GREAT BRITAIN</b> 
<b>Homicide (Murder)</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Rape</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Kidnapping</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Armed robbery</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>21%</b>

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*Angus Reid Public Opinion is the public affairs practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Public Opinion team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995*

*Vision Critical is now one of the largest market research enterprises in the world. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.*

*Angus Reid Public Opinion polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum ([www.angusreidforum.com](http://www.angusreidforum.com)), Springboard America ([www.springboardamerica.com](http://www.springboardamerica.com)) and Springboard UK ([www.springboarduk.com](http://www.springboarduk.com)) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.*

*Angus Reid, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.*

<http://bit.ly/4zxf1S>

*Since 2006, Angus Reid has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.*

*More information on the way Angus Reid conducts public opinion research can be found at*

<http://bit.ly/3z0u1l>

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**For more information, please contact  
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:**

<http://www.visioncritical.com/category/global-opinions-and-trends>

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