

FAIRNESS

MYTH

Every person who commits a capital crime receives a fair and just punishment regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status

FACT

More than 70% of people on Ohio's death row are there for a murder of a white person, even though more than half of all homicide victims are black. Of the 138 inmates on Ohio's death row, more than half are people of color even though they only make up 16% of Ohio's population. Data shows that 87% of black exonerees who were sentenced to death were victims of official misconduct compared to 67% of white death row exonerees.

MYTH

People are on death row because they committed the worst crimes

FACT

Severity of the crime does not determine who gets a death sentence. Access to adequate defense counsel, the county where the crime was committed, and the county prosecutor's personal views and approach to the death penalty are the biggest factors in determining whether or not someone receives a death sentence. Just five counties in Ohio - Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, and Summit are responsible for 68% of Ohio death cases.

DETERRENCE

MYTH

The death penalty deters crime

FACT

There is no evidence that having a death penalty in place deters violent crime. Indeed, the FBI Uniform Crime Report has repeatedly showed that the South, which accounts for over 80% of executions, has the highest murder rate.

MYTH

VS

FACT

MYTH VS FACT

The death penalty is a complex and irreversible punishment that is plagued by common misconceptions. OTSE assembled this list of the myths we hear most often in meetings and conversations, and the facts that debunk them.

For more info, visit www.otse.org.

COST

MYTH

Executions save money

FACT

The death penalty is the most expensive part of our criminal justice system. Studies across the nation have found that death penalty cases cost up to ten times more than non-death penalty cases. Without the death penalty, these resources could be used to help survivors, support mental health initiatives, and promote new initiatives to keep communities safe.

MYTH

The appeals process makes the death penalty more expensive

FACT

Most of the cost - 70% - is wrapped up in the trial phase of a capital case. The death penalty process is more complicated because a life is on the line. Capital cases involve more lawyers, witnesses, experts, pre-trial motions, a longer jury selection process, and countless other expenses that rack up exorbitant costs before even a single appeal is filed.

VICTIM FAMILY MEMBERS

MYTH

All victim's families want the death penalty

FACT

Many victim family members oppose the death penalty, some for moral reasons and others because of the harmful impact of the capital punishment process on survivors.. Some of the most vocal and active members of OTSE are victim family members, and three victim family members serve on OTSE's board. Instead of executions, they advocate for services that will help victim family members heal.

WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

MYTH

We only sentence people to death when we are 100% certain they committed the crime

FACT

Since 1973, 167 death row inmates have been exonerated of all charges and released. 9 of those were in Ohio, which means for every six executions, one person has been exonerated in our state. Some of the factors leading to wrongful convictions include (1) eyewitness mistake; (2) inadequate representation; (3) perjury by witnesses; (4) prosecutorial misconduct; or (5) jurors that did not understand the process.

PUBLIC OPINION

MYTH

Ohioans support the death penalty

FACT

In 2019, 60% of Americans preferred a sentence of life without the possibility of parole to a death sentence. Likewise, a majority of Ohioans also prefer a life without parole sentence over the death penalty.