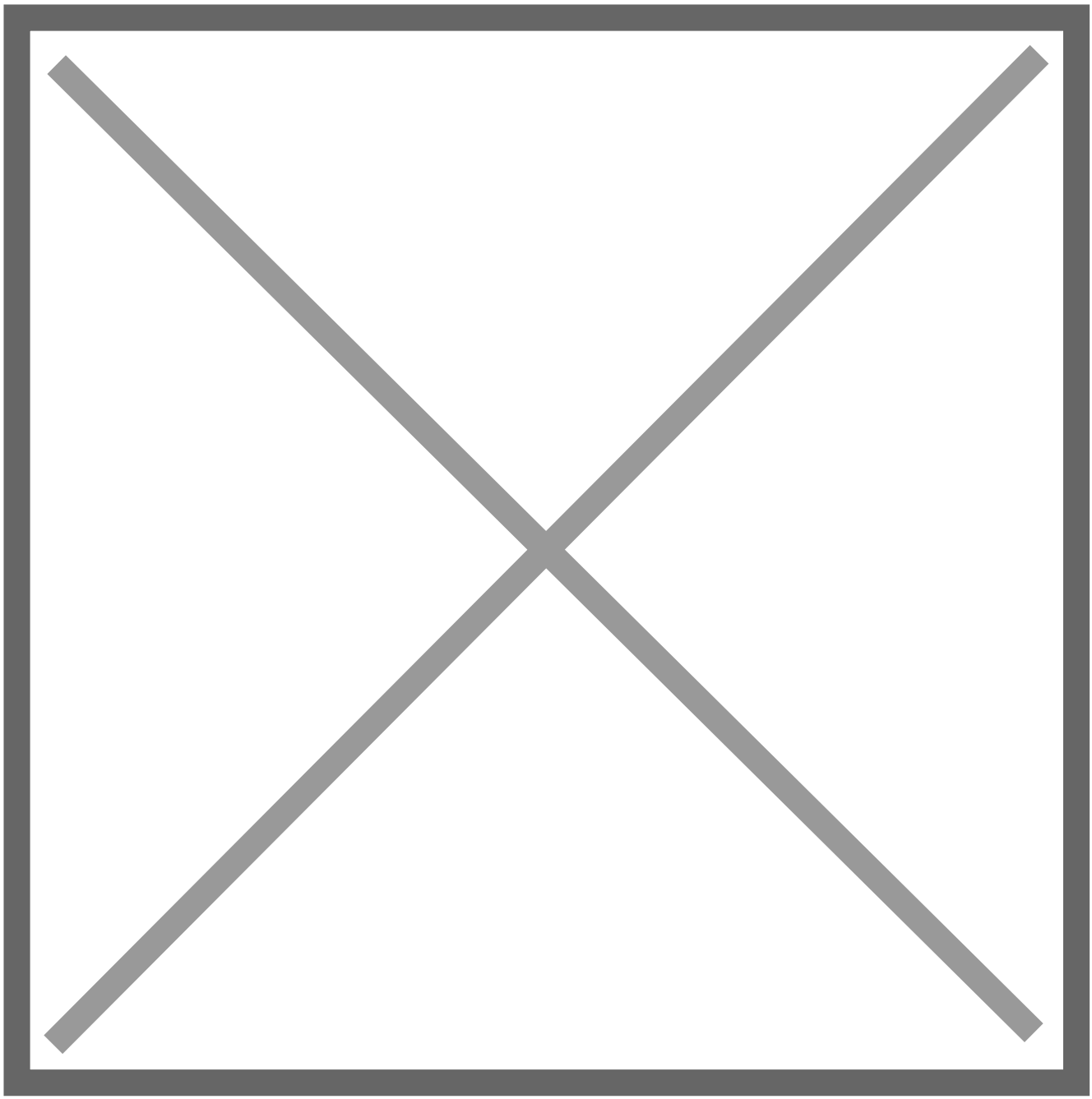
News



A file photo shows a group of demonstrators rallying against the death penalty outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington. Support for the death penalty among U.S. adults has dropped below the majority level for the first time since 1971, according to results of a new Gallup poll released Nov. 10, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Jonathan Ernst)

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Washington — November 10, 2026
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Support for the death penalty among U.S. adults has dropped below the majority level for the first time since 1971, a new Gallup poll found.

Forty-nine percent of U.S. adults said they are in favor of the death penalty for convicted murderers, while another 45% said they are opposed, the Nov. 10 poll said. While Gallup called the findings statistically similar to last year's rate of 52% approval, the new poll marks the first time support for the practice has been a minority position since 1971, when it was also at 49%.

Gallup said the last time support was lower than its current findings was in 1966, when a record-low 42% favored the death penalty. Support peaked at 80% in 1994, it said. Gallup said it first measured Americans' opinions about the death penalty in 1936.

The decline was primarily driven by declines in support for the practice among Democrats and younger generations of U.S. adults, Gallup said.

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, a group that advocates for the abolition of capital punishment in line with Catholic teaching, said in written comments to OSV News, "These results are a clear indication that fewer and fewer people are buying the false rhetoric that

the death penalty is effective or fair."

"Quite the contrary, in fact: Capital punishment introduces more violence and trauma to families, to our communities, and to society," Vaillancourt Murphy said. "It's encouraging to see the continued shift away from the culture of death and toward a culture of life."

Laura Porter, executive director of the U.S. Campaign to End the Death Penalty, said in a statement, "This is the second poll in a row to show that we are at a pivotal turning point in public opinion on the death penalty, as Americans have been horrified by the recent botched executions, as well as the proposal to livestream an execution. At the same time, both Republican and Democratic governors have been granting clemencies at an increasing pace. The death penalty is being seen for what it is, an utter failure."

Gallup said the findings are from a poll conducted Oct. 1-19, which began the day after the failed execution of Tennessee death-row inmate Christa Pike. Tennessee has suspended executions in the state for an investigation.

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Also during that timeframe, President Donald Trump called off Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's plans to livestream the execution of Fort Hood shooter Nidal Malik Hasan by firing squad in December. The plan was met with widespread condemnation, including from U.S. bishops. A poll released Oct. 15 by The Washington Post, ABC News and Ipsos found the overwhelming majority of Americans opposed Hegseth's plan to livestream the execution.

The Catholic Church's official magisterium opposes the use of capital punishment as a violation of the inherent sanctity of human life, and advocates for the abolition of the practice worldwide.

Pope Francis revised the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 2018 to clarify the Church's teaching that capital punishment is morally "inadmissible" in the modern world "because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person."

The teaching was reiterated by Pope Leo XIV in an Oct. 10 X post for the World Day Against the Death Penalty.