

'80%' approval of death penalty hit

Kyodo

The government inflates support for the death penalty in its opinion surveys and a significant portion of those who favor capital punishment also say they would support abolishing it in the future, according to an information science expert.

"It has been reported that more than 80 percent (of Japanese) approve the death penalty, but seen from an informatics perspective, it is unreasonable to make such a generalization," Fumiyasu Yamada, a professor of information science at Shizuoka University, said Tuesday.

In a December 2009 survey by the Cabinet Office, 85.6 percent said "the death penalty is unavoidable under certain circumstances," while 5.7 percent said "the death penalty should be abolished in all circumstances" and 8.6 percent said they "do not know."

Yamada noted that 34.2 percent of those who said capital punishment is "unavoidable" also said in the same survey that the death penalty "may be abolished if circumstances change in the future."

Given this figure, it is "natural to see that those who want the death penalty to be upheld comprise 50 percent, and those who want its elimination or a move toward elimination form slightly more than 30 percent," he said.

Yamada also criticized one of the choices in the survey, that the death penalty "should be abolished in all circumstances," saying such an expression is "too strong" and thus "makes it hard for people to choose it." Posing such a question is "biased," he said.

Yamada also said the survey isn't representative of the entire nation as questionnaires were collected only from about two-thirds of the people sampled.

The Japan Times: Thursday, Nov. 29, 2012

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