

## Death penalty gets strong support, but...

Most Singaporeans are in favour of the death penalty, but the support wavered when faced with different scenarios, a new survey has found.

Fewer people back the mandatory death penalty, and this support is weaker for drug trafficking and firearms offences where no death or injury has happened.

The findings of the study come four years after Singapore removed the mandatory penalty for some crimes, and amid a recent global debate on abolishing the death penalty.

Here, the death penalty is mandatory for those convicted of firearms offences, and under certain conditions, for drug-trafficking.

"It's important for us to continue to review the use of the death penalty because it's such a serious, harsh penalty, and one that is irreversible," said National University of Singapore (NUS) associate law professor Chan Wing Cheong at a media briefing yesterday.

He and three other researchers – NUS sociologist Tan Ern Ser, Singapore Management University law don Jack Lee and human rights group Maruah's president Braema Mathi – helmed the survey of 1,500 Singapore citizens aged 18 to 74.

It was conducted between April and May.

Seven in 10 people were in favour of the death penalty, a level of support similar to what an October survey of 1,160 people by government feedback arm Reach found.

But when researchers went into the specifics of the sentencing, or the details of each case, this support declined, noted Prof Tan.

For instance, 92 per cent said they were in favour of the death penalty for intentional murder, 86 per cent for drug trafficking and 88 per cent for discharging a firearm.

But, when people were asked if they favoured the mandatory death penalty for the same offences, the level of support was lower: 47 per cent for intentional murder, 32 per cent for drug trafficking, and 36 per cent for firearms offences.

— THE STRAITS TIMES