

Penal Populism

Criminal Justice

Policy driven by anticipated public reaction, and what surveys actually find.

Penal populism

- Policy driven by anticipated reaction
- Punishment as political positioning
- Individual cases drive general rules
- Evidence framed as elitist or soft
- Expansion is easier than reversal

Evidence-led policy

- Problem defined before the response
- Outcome measures set in advance
- Pilot, evaluate, then scale or stop
- Slower and politically less rewarding
- Still shaped by values, not only data

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Public opinion on punishment is more nuanced than headline polling suggests, especially once case detail is supplied.

Educational reference. Deliberative surveys find support for punitive responses falls when respondents receive full case information.