

Current Issues: Pro and Con, - Resource Guide

[Periodical Indexes, Full-text
Databases, and Electronic
Reference Sources](#)

[Selected Internet Sources](#)

[Selected Print Sources](#)

In addition to the sources below, users should check the [Online Catalog](#) for books on controversial issues. Keyword searches such as 'abortion rights,' or 'civil liberties AND terrorism' will generate lists of books useful for research on the divergent viewpoints surrounding these topics.

Periodical Indexes, Full-text Databases, and Electronic Reference Sources

[CQ Researcher](#)

Published by CQ Press, CQ Researcher provides 12,000-word reports 44 times a year, covering a single theme in each issue. Each report offers in-depth, non-biased coverage of political and social issues. Recent report topics include "Government Secrecy," "Intelligent Design," and "Right to Die."

[LexisNexis Academic](#)

For coverage of **newspapers from the 1980s onward**, users should look to LexisNexis Academic. Lexis contains the full-text of hundreds of domestic and international newspapers, including *The New York Times* (1980 -), the *Boston Globe* (1988 -), and *The Washington Post* (1977 -). Users can retrieve full-text articles and editorials - a good source for opinions on debated topics. Newspaper articles also frequently report the results of **polls and surveys**, and users may try adding one or both of these terms to their searches. Alternatively, LexisNexis allows the use of index terms, one of which is "polls and surveys." For more information on the use of LexisNexis, see the [Sawyer Library guide on LexisNexis Academic](#).

[Polling the Nations](#)

"Polling the Nations is a compilation of more than 14,000 surveys conducted by over 1000 polling organizations in the United States and 100 other countries from 1986 to the present time." Polling data from the following organizations are included:

- US polling organizations e.g., Harris International, The Pew Center
- Universities e.g., Rice University, University of Maryland
- Newspapers e.g., New York Times, Los Angeles Times
- Television news organizations e.g., CBS, NBS, Fox, CNN
- International polling organizations e.g., Eurobarometer
- Special interest groups e.g., Boy Scouts, AFL-CIO

"Each of the 500,000 records reports a question asked and the responses given. Also included in each record is the polling organization that conducted the work, the date the interviews were conducted, the release date of the information, the sample size and the universe." Sawyer Library's license for Polling the Nations is for one user at a time; please log out when finished.

[The New York Times \(1851 - 2004\)](#)

This full-text database of The New York Times (1851 - 2004) consists of scanned images of the actual paper. In addition to searches for articles, users can also search for editorial articles, editorial cartoons, and letters - effective venues for delivering opinions on controversial topics.

[The Wall Street Journal: 1984 - Present](#)

[The Wall Street Journal Archive: 1889-1990](#)

The Wall Street Journal, the financial newspaper of record, is another source for editorials and comments. The Archive, 1889-1990, is a searchable collection of PDF file images of the paper.

[Academic Search Complete](#)

[Business Source Complete](#)

Academic Search Complete and Business Source Complete (from EBSCO) are wide ranging periodical databases, covering topics in the social sciences and business. Both are good starting points for researching multiple viewpoints of a given issue. A notable publication contained in Academic Search Complete is the [Congressional Digest](#), which "reports on pros and cons, background and verbatim arguments of legislation before Congress, each issue dealing with one law under consideration." Academic Search Complete provides coverage of Congressional Digest from 1921 to the present.

[Academic OneFile](#)

[General BusinessFile ASAP](#)

[General Reference Center Gold](#)

Like the two Ebsco periodical databases above, these three databases from Thomson Gale (Infotrac) are wide ranging collections of primarily full-text articles from both scholarly and popular journals.

[CSA Indexes in the Social Sciences](#)

CSA Indexes in the Social Sciences contains several separate periodical databases, which may be searched as a group by going through CSA indexes, or they may be searched individually. Some of these may be useful for researching controversial topics, such as capital punishment or school prayer. The abstracts databases will link to full-text when it is available.

- [Communication Abstracts](#) (Communication literature, broadcasting, public opinions)
- [Criminal Justice Abstracts](#) (Crime trends, crime prevention, punishment and sentencing)
- [ERIC](#) (Teacher education, K-12, test, measurement, and evaluation)

(ERIC, a government database is also available through EBSCOhost, see below.)

- [Social Services Abstracts](#) (Social work, human services, social welfare)
- [Sociological Abstracts](#) (Social structure, social change, social problems)

[Sage Journals Online](#)

Sage Journals Online consists of 450 peer-reviewed journals, published by Sage, covering multiple areas and available in full text generally back to 1999. Sage is especially strong in the areas of communication, sociology, and criminology: topics which are frequently a source of controversy.

[SocINDEX with Full Text](#)

SocINDEX is a high quality and extensive sociology research periodical database. Many journal are available in full text, and some with coverage as far back as 1908.

[ERIC](#)

ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center) indexes and provides abstracts to education literature. Links to the full text of documents and articles are provided when available.

[Sage eReference](#)

Another online collection of subject specific encyclopedias, this time from the scholarly publisher Sage. Topical areas include Aging & Gerontology, Criminology & Criminal Justice, and Gender & Sexuality Studies.

[Gale Virtual Reference Library \(GVRL\)](#)

"Gale Virtual Reference Library is a database of encyclopedias and specialized reference sources for multidisciplinary research." Titles relevant to current issues and pro- and con- topics include:

- Science in Dispute Vol. 1, 2002; Vol. 2, 2002; Vol. 3, 2003
- New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, 6v, 2005
- History Behind the Headlines: The Origins of Conflicts Worldwide, 6v, 2001
- Encyclopedia of Bioethics, 3rd ed., 5v, 2004
- Encyclopedia of Ethical, Legal and Policy Issues in Biotechnology, 2v, 2000
- International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family, 2nd ed., 4v, 2003
- Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice, 2nd ed., 4v, 2002

[Encyclopedia Britannica](#)

Always a good source of background information, the online version of the complete Encyclopedia Britannica contains articles such as "The Legal Debate over Same-Sex Marriages," and "The Science and Ethics of Embryonic Stem Cell Research."

Selected Internet Sources

[Best Information on the Net: Hot Paper Topics](#)

<http://library.sau.edu/bestinfo/Hot/hotindex.htm>

The librarians at St. Ambrose University have compiled very useful sets of annotated links to websites that are concerned with many controversial issues such as gun control, affirmative action, and censorship. Although the websites may not explicitly discuss the pros and cons of an issue, they are good resources for background research on an issue. The North Harris College Library produces a shorter list of [Controversial Topics](#) with annotated links to websites on topics such as the death penalty, the medical use of marijuana, and violence in the media.

[Documents in the News: Current Events Research](#)

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/docnews.html>

If you are casting about for a topic, check out this website for ideas. The Documents Center at the University of Michigan Library maintains an extensive list of news topics, each of which has many links (some annotated) to websites that address the topic. A very well organized and easily navigable site.

[Hot Topics Supersites](#)

<http://infodome.sdsu.edu/research/guides/hot/supersites.shtml>

Like the University of Michigan's [Documents in the News](#) website, this website developed by San Diego State University is a good starting point for someone who needs to select a topic. Each of the 11 supersites has "resources on many controversial topics of current interest." Supersites include the ACLU Freedom Network, the Envirolink Network, Ethics Updates, and Project Vote Smart among others.

[Debatabase](#)

<http://www.idebate.org/index.php>

Sponsored by IDEA (the International Debate Education Association), the website's Debatabase is a searchable, browsable "online debate topic database," which IDEA claims is "the world's most useful resource for student debaters. Inside you will find arguments for and against hundreds of debating topics, written by expert debaters, judges and coaches. Also included are background summaries, links to websites of interest and recommended books, example motions and user comments." The latest topics are listed on the front page right. For others, use the search engine, or browse by subject area.

[Public Agenda Online](#)

<http://www.publicagenda.org/index.htm>

Public Agenda, a "nonpartisan, nonprofit public opinion research and citizen education organization," publishes reports on a range of major policy issues. Each "issue guide" published on their website "lays out the facts and policy alternatives, while the Public Opinion section offers a detailed profile of public thinking about the issue." One example of this approach is the issue guide on Abortion which provides an overview, a fact file, and three perspectives on the issue while the Public Opinion section of the guide reports and interprets survey and research results.

[National Issues Forum: Reports](http://www.nifi.org/reports/issues.aspx)

<http://www.nifi.org/reports/issues.aspx>

"National Issues Forums (NIF) is a nonpartisan, nationwide network of locally sponsored public forums for the consideration of public policy issues. It is rooted in the simple notion that people need to come together to reason and talk....Periodically reports are published to communicate the outcomes of forums held across the nation about a particular issue. Making use of participants' answers to Forum Questionnaires, reports from moderators, and in-depth studies of selected forums, these reports describe in some detail what happened as people deliberated about the issue at hand." The website reproduces some of these reports in PDF form. Topics include Terrorism, Health Care, and Racial & Ethnic Tensions. Reports quote from citizens around the country and indicate both general consensus conclusions as well as opposing views.

[AlterNet.org](http://www.alternet.org/index.html)

<http://www.alternet.org/index.html>

"AlterNet.org is a project of the Independent Media Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening and supporting independent and alternative journalism." This online magazine "provides a mix of news, opinion and investigative journalism" that often takes an editorial viewpoint not expressed in mainstream media. A recent issue discussed the war on Iraq, human rights and civil liberties, the culture and politics of media, and news from the front lines of the drug war. The magazine is keyword searchable.

[Historic Supreme Court Decisions - By Topic](http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/cases/topic.htm)

<http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/cases/topic.htm>

Some of the most controversial social issues in the United States end up being argued before the Supreme Court. This webpage, posted by the Legal Information Institute of Cornell University's Law School, pulls together high court decisions by topics like abortion, flag desecration, and freedom of the press. If you click on a topic, you will pull up a list of major decisions related to it. Click on the plus sign next to the case citation, and you will see basic information about the case. This website provides real legal information and links to further decisions. You will not find instant analysis here, but it can be useful for those who wish to cite landmark Supreme Court decisions in their own arguments.

[National Center for Policy Analysis](http://www.ncpa.org/)

<http://www.ncpa.org/>

"The NCPA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization" that "encourages

individual rights, free enterprise and self-government." Their stated mission is "to seek innovative private-sector solutions to public policy problems." As might be expected, policy issues run the gamut from crime to welfare. Pro and con discussions, articles, and streaming videos can be found on the [Both Sides](#) page.

[PBS Online NewsHour: Index](#)

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/newshour_index.html

Browsable and keyword searchable indexes allow you to retrieve background reports and transcripts, on a wide range of topics, from the PBS television program "Newshour with Jim Lehrer." Some of the topical areas are politics, science, religion, the budget, and business. [Frontline](#), a PBS public affairs television program, also has browsable and keyword searchable indexes to its documentary reports on controversial issues in foreign affairs, the government, criminal justice, and health, science, and technology.

[CNN Special Reports](#)

<http://www.cnn.com/topics/>

You will find reports that range from health issues (e.g. the stem cell debate) to space exploration (e.g. the Columbia space shuttle disaster) on the CNN website. The in-depth coverage means that you will often find pro and con viewpoints. Special reports from the 2005 archive include articles on Pope John Paul II (1920-2005), global warming, and North Korea: Nuclear tension. Special reports are available on the website from 1995.

Public Opinion

Opinion polls frequently tackle current issues and controversial topics. The Public Opinion section of the [Sawyer Library's 'Politics and Government in the United States Resource Guide'](#) points to further resources for finding public opinion polls.

[Criminal Justice Resource Guide](#)

Since many controversial topics are within the realm of Criminal Justice, users may wish to view the Sawyer Library's 'Criminal Justice Resource Guide.'

Selected Print Sources

[History in Dispute](#) 21 vols.

REF D20 .H56 2000 v.1 - D20 .H56 2005 V.21

Each volume in this set addresses a separate theme, such as American Social and Political Movements (volumes 2 and 3), and the Red Scare after 1945 (volume 19).

[Opposing Viewpoints Series](#)

[Current Controversies Series](#)

[At Issue Series](#)

These multivolume series present both sides of controversial issues. Each volume is devoted to

one topic, such as abortion, euthanasia, drug legalization, and topics in politics and foreign affairs.

[Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics](#) 3 vols.

REF BJ63 .E44 1998

This three volume set covers the theories, concepts, and practical issues in ethics. Essay topics include: gun control, land use issues, and political correctness.

[Ethics](#) Revised edition.

REF BJ63 .E54 2005

Covers multiple issues in a range of categories, such as Arts and Censorship, Beliefs and Practices, and Military Ethics.

[Bioethics: Health Care Law and Ethics](#)

REF. KF3821 .A7B56 2001

Covers health care related ethics statements, right-to-die issues, genetic screening, organ transplantation, and health care regulation.

[Encyclopedia of Crime and Justice](#) 4 vols.

REF HV6017 .E52 2002

This second edition continues in the goal of attempting to gather "all that is known about criminal behavior and the response of societies to it." There are 250 extensive essays, ranging from 800 - 12,000 words, all of which include bibliographies. Also available in full-text via [Gale's Virtual Reference Library](#).

[Encyclopedia of Criminology](#) 3 vols.

REF HV6017 .E5295 2005

Covers both traditional and contemporary topics of criminology, including law enforcement, courts, corrections, and 'Cross Cultural and Global Crime and Justice.'

[Encyclopedia of Criminology and Deviant Behavior](#) 4 vols.

REF HV6017 .E53 2001

Each volume is devoted to a specific range of topics:

- Historical, Conceptual, and Theoretical Issues
- Crime and Juvenile Delinquency
- Sexual Deviance
- Self-Destructive Behavior and Devalued Identity