NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS SINCE 1976: 1543

RACE OF DEFENDANTS EXECUTED
- White: 858
- Black: 529
- Latinx: 129
- Other: 27

More than 75% of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were white, even though nationally only 50% of murder victims generally are white.
Persons Executed for Interracial Murders

300

21

White Def./ Black Victim

Black Def./ White Victim

Race of Death Row Prisoners and Death Row Prisoners by State Source: NAACP Legal Defense Fund, “Death Row USA” (January 1, 2022). The combined state totals are slightly higher than the reported national total. That is because a few prisoners are sentenced to death in more than one state. Those prisoners are included in each state’s totals, but only once in the national total.
DEATH SENTENCING

295 death sentences were imposed in the U.S. in 1998. The number of death sentences per year has dropped dramatically since then.

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MENTAL DISABILITIES

- **Intellectual Disabilities**: In 2002, the Supreme Court held in Atkins v. Virginia that it is unconstitutional to execute defendants with 'mental retardation.'
- **Mental Illness**: The American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and the American Bar Association have endorsed resolutions calling for an exemption of the severely mentally ill.

DETERRENCE

- A report by the National Research Council, titled Deterrence and the Death Penalty, stated that studies claiming that the death penalty has a deterrent effect on murder rates are “fundamentally flawed” and should not be used when making policy decisions (2012).
- A DPIC study of 30 years of FBI Uniform Crime Report homicide data found that the South has consistently had by far the highest murder rate. The South accounts for more than 80% of executions. The Northeast, which has fewer than 0.5% of all executions, has consistently had the lowest murder rate.
- According to a survey of the former and present presidents of the country’s top academic criminological societies, 88% of these experts rejected the notion that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to murder.

EXECUTIONS SINCE 1976 BY METHOD USED

- 1363 Lethal Injection
- 163 Electrocution
- 11 Gas Chamber
- 3 Hanging
- 3 Firing Squad

30 states plus the US government use lethal injection as their primary method. Some states utilizing lethal injection have other methods available as backups. New Hampshire abolished the death penalty in 2019, but the law was not retroactive, leaving one prisoner on death row and the lethal injection protocol intact.

JUVENTILES

- In 2005, the Supreme Court in Roper v. Simmons struck down the death penalty for juveniles. Since 1976, 22 defendants had been executed for offenses committed as juveniles.

WOMEN

- There were 51 women on death row as of October 1, 2021. This constitutes 2.08% of the total death row population. (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, October 1, 2021). 17 women have been executed since 1976.
PUBLIC OPINION AND THE DEATH PENALTY

A 2009 poll commissioned by DPIC found police chiefs ranked the death penalty last among ways to reduce violent crime. The police chiefs also considered the death penalty the least efficient use of taxpayers' money.

Lack of law enforcement resource: 20%
Drug/Alcohol abuse: 20%
Family problems/child abuse: 14%
Lack of programs for mentally ill: 12%
Crowded courts: 7%
Ineffective prosecution: 6%
Too many guns: 5%
Gangs: 3%
Insufficient use of the death penalty: 2%

A 2010 poll by Lake Research Partners found that a clear majority of voters (61%) would choose a punishment other than the death penalty for murder.

Support for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

The Death Penalty Information Center has available more extensive reports on a variety of issues, including:

- “The Death Penalty in 2021: Year-End Report” (December 2021)
- “DPIC Special Report: The Innocence Epidemic” (February 2021)
- "Enduring Injustice: the Persistence of Racial Discrimination in the U.S. Death Penalty" (September 2020)
- “Behind the Curtain: Secrecy and the Death Penalty in the United States” (November 2018)
- “Battle Scars: Military Veterans and the Death Penalty” (November 2015)
- “The 2% Death Penalty: How a Minority of Counties Produce Most Death Cases at Enormous Costs to All” (October 2013)
- “Struck By Lightning: The Continuing Arbitrariness of the Death Penalty 35 Years After Its Reinstatement in 1976” (June 2011)
- “Smart on Crime: Reconsidering the Death Penalty in a Time of Economic Crisis” (October 2009)
- “A Crisis of Confidence: Americans’ Doubts About the Death Penalty” (2007)
- "Blind Justice: Juries Deciding Life and Death with Only Half the Truth" (2005)
- "Innocence and the Crisis in the American Death Penalty" (2004)