



THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE UNITED STATES

- = **3297** people sit on death rows in the United States, condemned to death by states or the federal government.
- = In addition to the federal government and United States military, 35 states have the death penalty.
- = New Mexico abolished the death penalty in March 2009, following the lead of New Jersey, which abolished capital punishment in 2008.

EXECUTIONS

- = **1185** people have been executed in the United States since 1976. Of those, 412 people – 35% – were African American.
- = In about 80% of cases where the defendant has been executed, the victim was white.
- = The vast majority of executions (980) have been carried out by Southern states. Texas and Virginia lead the nation in executions, with over 550 executions between them since 1976.
- = **51** people have been executed in 2009. Texas led the nation with 23 executions, followed by Alabama, which executed 6 people in 2009.
- = **37** people were executed in 2008, in Texas, Virginia, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Ohio, Mississippi, and Kentucky, down from 42 in 2007 and 53 in 2006.

RACE

- = **More than half** of the people on death row in this country are people of color. Of the 3297 condemned, 42% are Black, 11% are Hispanic, and 45% are White.
- = Prominent researchers have documented a pattern of discrimination in the application of the death penalty based on the race of the victim, race of the defendant, or both, in nearly every state that uses capital punishment. All but 2% of the chief prosecutors in death penalty states are white; only 1% are black.

- = In nearly 80% of the cases resulting in execution since 1976, the victim was white. Only 50% of murder victims nationwide are white.

INNOCENCE

- = **139** people have been released from death row after evidence of their innocence came to light.
- = From 1973-1999, there was an average of 3.1 exonerations per year.
- = The period from 2000-2007 has seen an average of 5 exonerations per year.

SENTENCING

- = The death sentencing rate has dropped dramatically since 1999. From 277 death sentences in 1999, the number of death sentences declined to 111 in 2008.
- = Overall support of the death penalty is also on the decline. A 2008 Gallup Poll found that overall support was down to 64% from 80% in 1994.
- = When respondents are given a choice of life without possibility of parole as an alternate sentencing option, more chose life without parole (48%) than the death penalty (47%).
- = A 2009 poll found police chiefs ranked the death penalty last among ways to reduce violent crime and considered the death penalty the least efficient use of taxpayers' money.

COST

- = In Maryland, an average death penalty case resulting in a death sentence costs approximately \$3 million. For cases pursued 1978-1999, which resulted in 5 executions, the cost to taxpayers is \$186 million.
- = The death penalty costs Florida \$51 million a year more than the cost to punish all first-degree murderers with life in prison without parole. Florida's 44 executions since 1976 have cost taxpayers \$24 million each.

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- Data from Death Penalty Information Center, at deathpenaltyinfo.org