



THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE UNITED STATES

- = **3309** 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, 36 states have the death penalty.
- = New York did not reinstate the death penalty after its highest court declared its death penalty statute unconstitutional in 2004, and New Jersey abolished capital punishment in 2008.

EXECUTIONS

- = **1135** people have been executed in the United States since 1976. Of those, 390 people – 34% – were African American.
- = In about 80% of cases where the defendant has been executed, the victim was white.
- = The vast majority of executions (935) have been carried out by Southern states. Texas and Virginia lead the nation in executions, with over 500 executions between them since 1976.
- = **42** people were executed in 2007, down from 53 in 2006.
- = **37** people have been executed in 2008, in Texas, Virginia, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Ohio, Mississippi, and Kentucky. The number of executions has been declining steadily since the all-time high of 98 executions in 1999.

RACE

- = **More than half** of the people on death row in this country are people of color. Of the 3309 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 80% of the cases resulting in execution since 1976, the victim was white. Only 50% of murder victims nationwide are white.
- = Nationwide, researchers found that 15 white people had been executed for murder involving a black victim, whereas 230 black people had been executed for murder involving a white victim.

INNOCENCE

- = **130** 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 steadily each year since 1999. From 277 death sentences in 1999, the number of death sentences declined to 110 in 2007.
- = 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%).

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