Updated: May 2, 2013

NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS
SINCE 1976: 1330

Race of Defendants Executed
- White: 748
- Black: 455
- Hispanic: 103
- Other: 24

Race of Victims in Death Penalty Cases
- White: 76%
- Black: 15%
- Hispanic: 7%
- Other: 2%

Over 75% of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were white, even though nationally only 50% of murder victims generally are white.
RECENT STUDIES ON RACE

• In Louisiana, the odds of a death sentence were 97% higher for those whose victim was white than for those whose victim was black. (Pierce & Radelet, Louisiana Law Review, 2011).

• A study in California found that those who killed whites where over 3 times more likely to be sentenced to death than those who killed blacks and over 4 times more likely than those who killed Latinos. (Pierce & Radelet, Santa Clara Law Review, 2005).

• A comprehensive study of the death penalty in North Carolina found that the odds of receiving a death sentence rose by 3.5 times among those defendants whose victims where white. (Prof. Jack Boger and Dr. Isaac Unah, University of North Carolina, 2001).

• In 96% of states where there have been reviews of race and the death penalty, there was a pattern of either race-of-victim or race-of-defendant discrimination, or both. (Prof. Baldus report to the ABA, 1998).

• 98% of the chief district attorneys in death penalty states are white; only 1% are black. (Prof. Jeffrey Pokorak, Cornell Law Review, 1998).

INNOCENCE

• Since 1973, over 130 people have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. (Staff Report, House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil & Constitutional Rights, Oct. 1993, with updates from DPIC).

• From 1973-1999, there was an average of 3 exonerations per year. From 2000-2011, there has been an average of 5 exonerations per year.
DEATH SENTENCING

The number of death sentences per year has dropped dramatically since 1999.

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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.

JUVENILES

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

WOMEN

- There were 63 women on death row as of October 1, 2012. This constitutes 2% of the total death row population. 12 women have been executed since 1976. (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, October 1, 2012).

DETERRENCE

- 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. (Radelet & Lacock, 2009)

- 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).

- Consistent with previous years, the 2011 FBI Uniform Crime Report showed that the South had the highest murder rate. The South accounts for over 80% of executions. The Northeast, which has less than 1% of all executions, had lowest murder rate.

EXECUTIONS BY REGION*

*Federal executions are listed in the region in which the crime was committed.
The Death Penalty Information Center has available more extensive reports on a variety of issues, including:

- "The Death Penalty in 2012: Year-End Report" (December 2012)
- "The Death Penalty in 2011: Year-End Report" (December 2011)
- "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)
- "Innocence and the Death Penalty: The Increasing Danger of Executing the Innocent" (1997)