Updated: December 9, 2015

NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS SINCE 1976: 1,422

RACE OF DEFENDANTS EXECUTED
- White: 787
- Black: 493
- Hispanic: 118
- 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.
Persons Executed for Interracial Murders

- Since 1973, more than 150 people have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. (Staff Report, House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil & Constitutional Rights, 1993, with updates from DPIC).

- From 1973-1999, there was an average of 3 exonerations per year. From 2000-2011, there was an average of 5 exonerations per year.

Race of Death Row Inmates and Death Row Inmates by State

Source: NAACP Legal Defense Fund, “Death Row USA” (July 1, 2015). When added, the total number of death row inmates by state is slightly higher than the given total because some prisoners are sentenced to death in more than one state.
### Executions by State since 1976

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### Executions by Region*

- **South**: 1156
- **Midwest**: 177
- **West**: 85
- **Northeast**: 4
- **TX & OK**: 643

*Federal executions are listed in the region in which the crime was committed.

### Executions by Method Used

- **1247** Lethal Injection
- **158** Electrocution
- **11** Gas Chamber
- **3** Hanging
- **3** Firing Squad

34 states plus the US government use lethal injection as their primary method. Some states utilizing lethal injection have other methods available as backups. Though New Mexico and Connecticut have abolished the death penalty, their laws were not retroactive, leaving prisoners on the states’ death row and their lethal injection protocols intact.

### Mentals 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

- **Do executions lower homicide rates?**
  - Yes: 5%
  - No: 88%
  - No Opinion: 7%

- 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 2014 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.
- 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)

### Murder Rates per 100,000 (2014)

- **South**: 5.5
- **Midwest**: 4.3
- **West**: 3.9
- **Northeast**: 3.3
- **Nat'l**: 4.5

### Executions since 1976 by Method Used

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### 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 56 women on death row as of Dec. 31, 2014. This constitutes less than 2% of the total death row population. (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Jan. 1, 2015). 16 women have been executed since 1976.
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
Drug/Alcohol abuse
Family problems/child abuse
Lack of programs for mentally ill
Crowded courts
Ineffective prosecution
Too many guns
Gangs
Insufficient use of the death penalty

The Death Penalty Information Center has available more extensive reports on a variety of issues, including:
- "The Death Penalty in 2014: Year-End Report" (December 2014)
- "The 2% Death Penalty: How a Minority of Counties Produce Most Death Cases at Enormous Costs to All” (October 2013)
- "The Death Penalty in 2013: Year-End Report" (December 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)
- "Innocence and the Death Penalty: The Increasing Danger of Executing the Innocent” (1997)