

Capital Punishment (Death Penalty)

(Some selected Statistics & Information)

Worldwide Status as of 18 December, 1999 (ref (1)); Number of nations that have:

- o Abolished capital punishment for all crimes: 70
- o Abolished capital punishment for ordinary crimes only: 13
- o De facto abolished capital punishment (death penalty remains, but no executions for 10 years): 23
- o Performed capital punishment during the last 10 years 90

Prisoners under sentence of Death in the United States as of 1 Sept, 1999 (ref (2)) by race and ethnicity:

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|---------------------------|--|--|
| o Total 3,625 | | o Selected States with highest totals |
| o White 1,686 (46%) | | o California 551 |
| o Black 1,544 (43%) | | o Texas 458 |
| o Hispanic 311 (9%) | | o Florida 393 |
| o Native American 46 (1%) | | o Pennsylvania 223 |
| o Asian 31 (1%) | | o North Carolina 221 |
| o Unknown 7 | | o Ohio 196 |

o Reality check: in 1997 there were over 18,000 murders in the United States; for the years 1976-1998 there were an estimated 481,500 homicides in the U.S. (ref (4))

Executions During 1999 totaled 98, in 1997 they totaled 74; with 92% by lethal injection; the avg. time under sentence of death was 11 years 1 month; executions per state in 1997:

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|--------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| o Texas 37 | Arizona 2 | Florida 1 | Maryland 1 |
| o Virginia 9 | Illinois 2 | Indiana 1 | Nebraska 1 |
| o Missouri 6 | South Carolina 2 | Kentucky 1 | Oklahoma 1 |
| o Arkansas 4 | Colorado 1 | Louisiana 1 | Oregon 1 |
| o Alabama 3 | | | |

Jurisdictions without a death penalty as of 1997 (ref (3)):

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| o Alaska | D.C. | Hawaii | Iowa |
| o Maine | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota |
| o North Dakota | Rhode Island | Vermont | West Virginia |
| o Wisconsin | | | |

General statistics as of 1997 (ref (3)):

- o At the end of 1997 there were 3,335 prisoners under sentence of death (44 were women)
- o The average age at time of arrest was 28 with 2% of inmates age 17 or younger
- o At year end, the youngest inmate was 18, the oldest 82
- o Of the 5,796 people under sentence of death between 1977 and 1997, 7.5% were executed, 2.7% died by causes other than execution, and 32.2% received other dispositions
- o From 1930 through 1997 there were 4,291 persons executed in the United States (441 in Texas alone), and an additional 160 executions were carried out by military authorities
 - o 1930-1939 1667
 - o 1940-1949 1284
 - o 1950-1959 717
 - o 1960-1969 191
 - o 1970-1979 3
 - o 1980-1989 117
 - o 1990-1997 311

Federal laws providing for the death penalty as of 1997 (ref (3)):

- o Murder related to: smuggling of aliens; destruction of aircraft, motor vehicles, or related facilities resulting in death; bank robbery or kidnaping; car-jacking; rape or child molestation; sexual exploitation of children; a continuing criminal enterprise or related murder of a Federal, State, or local law enforcement officer
- o Murder committed: during a drug-related drive-by shooting; at an airport serving international civil aviation; in a Federal Gov. facility; during a kidnaping; against a Federal Judge or law enforcement official, a foreign official, a Federal prisoner, a U.S. national in a foreign country; by the use of a

- firearm during a crime of violence or a drug trafficking crime; during an offense against a maritime fixed platform or maritime navigation
- o Espionage; genocide; civil rights offenses resulting in death; treason; murder for hire; willful wrecking of a train resulting in death; terrorist murder of a U.S. national in another country; death resulting from aircraft hijacking; retaliatory murder of a member of the immediate family of law enforcement officials
- o Murder: during a hostage taking; of a court officer or juror; with the intent of preventing testimony by a witness, victim or informant; involved in a racketeering offense; involving torture; by an escaped Federal prisoner already sentenced to life imprisonment; of a State or local law enforcement official or other person aiding in a Federal investigation; of a State correctional officer; of a member of Congress, an important executive official, or a Supreme Court Justice
- o Murder by the use of a weapon of mass destruction; mailing of injurious articles with intent to kill or resulting in death; retaliatory murder of a witness, victim or informant
- o Assassination or kidnaping resulting in the death of the President or Vice President
- o Death resulting from offenses involving transportation of explosives, destruction of government property, or destruction of property related to foreign or interstate commerce

State laws providing for the death penalty as of 1997 (ref (3))

- o Generally, some portion or combination of: first degree murder with aggravating factors; treason; train wrecking; perjury causing execution; capital drug-trafficking; hijacking; kidnaping with bodily injury or ransom where the victim dies; aggravated rape of victim under age 12; aircraft piracy; capital sexual assault; contract murder; aggravated assault by a prisoner serving a life sentence if serious bodily injury is intentionally caused; solicitation by command or threat in furtherance of a narcotics conspiracy

Methods of Execution (16 States authorize several different methods) at end of 1997:

- o Lethal Injection (32 States; & Federal crimes (or the method of the State in which conviction occurred))
- o Electrocution (11 States)
- o Lethal Gas (6 States)
- o Hanging (3 States)(from 1977-1997 Delaware (1) and Washington (2))
- o Firing Squad (3 States)(from 1977-1997 Utah (2))

Age of Eligibility for the death penalty at the end of 1997 (ref (3)):

- o 14 States and the Federal system require a minimum age of 18
- o 16 States indicated a minimum age of eligibility between 14 and 17

Demographics for prisoners (3,335) under sentence of death at end of 1997 (ref (3)):

- o Male: 98.7% White: 56.3% 8th grade or less: 14.2% Married: 24.5%
- o Female: 1.3% Black: 42.2% 9th - 11th grade: 37.6% Div/Separated: 21.3%
- Other: 1.6% H. S. grad/GED: 38.0% Widowed: 2.6%
- Some college: 10.1% Never married: 51.5%

- o 65% had past felony convictions with 9% with at least one previous homicide conviction

Race on Race statistics as of 1997 for instances involving one offender and one victim:

- o 94% of black murder victims were murdered by black offenders
- o 85% of white murder victims were murdered by white offenders

References:

1. Amnesty international (“www.amnesty.org” for a complete listing)
2. “Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics” (found on “www.albany.edu/sourcebook”)
3. U.S. Department of Justice; Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics (“www.ojp.usdoj/bjs/pubalp2.htm#Captial Punishment”)
4. FBI estimates are reported by the Bureau of Justice