



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

ADVANCE FOR RELEASE AT 4:30 P.M. EST
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2006
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs

Bureau of Justice Statistics
Contact: Stu Smith: 202-307-0784
After hours: 301-983-9354

THE NUMBER OF DEATH ROW INMATES DECLINED FOR FIFTH STRAIGHT YEAR DURING 2005

Washington — The Federal Bureau of Prisons and 36 states held 3,254 inmates on death row at the end of last year, which was 66 fewer such inmates than at the end of 2004, the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. The 2005 drop was the fifth consecutive year the number of prisoners with a death sentence had fallen. There were 3,601 death row prisoners on December 31, 2000.

During 2005, 128 inmates were put on death row, which was the lowest number of admissions since 1973, when 44 persons were admitted. This was the third consecutive year such admissions had declined.

Sixteen states executed 60 prisoners last year, which was one more execution than in 2004. It was 38 fewer than in 1999, the peak year for executions since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976. Those executed during 2005 had been under a sentence of death an average of 12 years and 3 months, or 15 months longer than for inmates executed in 2004.

Texas carried out 19 executions last year. Indiana, Missouri and North Carolina each executed five inmates. Ohio, Alabama and Oklahoma executed four each. Georgia and South Carolina executed three each. California executed two. Connecticut, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Maryland and Mississippi each executed one. Fifty-nine men and one woman were executed during 2005. The execution in Connecticut was the first in that state since 1960.

Four States (California, Texas, Florida and Pennsylvania) held half of all death row inmates as of December 31, 2005. The Federal Bureau of Prisons held 37 death row inmates.

Among the inmates sentenced to death for whom information was available, 65 percent had a prior felony conviction, including 8 percent with at least one previous homicide conviction. Nearly 4 in 10 inmates under a death sentence committed the capital crime while on probation, parole or in some other criminal justice status.

(MORE)

Fifty-six percent of death row inmates were white and 42 percent were black. The 362 Hispanic inmates under sentence of death accounted for 13 percent of inmates with a known ethnicity. Ninety-eight percent of all inmates were male and 2 percent were female.

The average age of death row inmates on December 31, 2005, was 42 years old. The oldest death row inmate was 90; the youngest was 20. Among inmates for whom the date of arrest was available, 11 percent (342 of the 2,985 inmates) were 19 or younger at the time of their arrest.

Of the 7,320 people under a death sentence between 1977 and 2005, 14 percent had been executed, 4 percent died from causes other than execution and 37 percent received other dispositions. A slightly higher percentage of whites (16 percent) than blacks and Hispanics (11 percent) have been executed.

During the first 11 months of 2006, fewer executions have been carried out compared with the same period in 2005. As of November 30, 2006, 14 states had executed 52 inmates. This is three fewer than the number executed as of the same date in 2005.

Lethal injection accounted for all 60 executions during 2005 and 51 of the 52 executions in the first 11 months of 2006. Thirty-seven states authorized the use of lethal injection as of December 31, 2005, up from 32 in 1995. Between 1977 and 2005, 836 of the 1,004 executions (83 percent) were by lethal injection.

The report, *Capital Punishment, 2005* (NCJ-215083) was written by BJS statistician Tracy L. Snell. Following publication, the report can be found at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cp05.htm

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics statistical reports programs, please visit the BJS Web site at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP is headed by an Assistant Attorney General and comprises five component bureaus and an office: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and the Office for Victims of Crime, as well as the Community Capacity Development Office, which incorporates the Weed and Seed strategy and OJP's American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Desk. More information can be found at www.ojp.usdoj.gov.

###