



SELECTED FINDINGS

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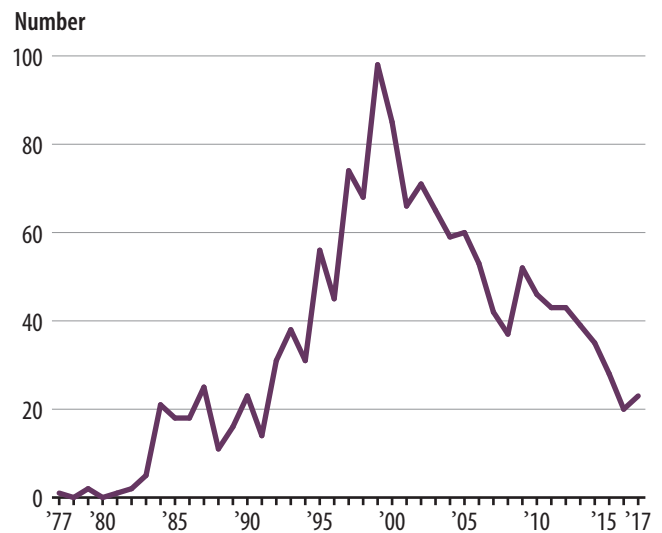
Capital Punishment, 2017: Selected Findings

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This report presents selected findings from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' annual data collection on capital punishment. It includes statistics on the number of prisoners executed each year from 1977 through 2017, the number and race of prisoners under sentence of death at year-end 2017 by state, and the average elapsed time from sentence to execution by year from 1977 through 2017.

BJS obtained data on prisoners under sentence of death from the department of corrections in each jurisdiction that authorized the death penalty as of December 31, 2017. The status of the death penalty was obtained from the office of the attorney general in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the federal government. Data covered all persons under sentence of death at any time during the year who were held in a state or federal non-military correctional facility. It included capital offenders transferred from prison to mental hospitals and those who may have escaped from custody. It excluded persons whose death sentences had been overturned in court, regardless of their current incarceration status.

FIGURE 1
Annual number of prisoners executed under civil authority in the United States, 1977–2017



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics – Capital Punishment, 1977–2017. See table 3 for counts of prisoners executed.

HIGHLIGHTS

- At year-end 2017, a total of 32 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) held 2,703 prisoners under sentence of death, which was 94 (3%) less than at year-end 2016.
- In 2017, the number of prisoners held under sentence of death declined for the 17th consecutive year.
- Eighteen states held fewer prisoners under sentence of death at year-end 2017 than at year-end 2016, 3 states and the BOP held more prisoners, and 11 states held the same number.
- Three states accounted for 59% of the national decline in prisoners under sentence of death in 2017: Florida (down 33 prisoners), Delaware (down 12), and Texas (down 10).
- Thirty-four states and the federal government authorized the death penalty at year-end 2017; two of these states (New York and Wyoming) had no prisoners under sentence of death during the year.
- Prisoners executed in 2017 had been under sentence of death for an average of 20 years and 3 months, which was an increase of 3 years and 3 months from 2016 and an increase of 7 years and 6 months from 2007.
- Of the 23 prisoners executed in 2017, a total of 16 (more than two-thirds) had been sentenced in 1999 or earlier.

TABLE 1**Status of the death penalty, December 31, 2017**

Executions in 2017		Number of prisoners under sentence of death		Jurisdictions without death penalty
Texas	7	California	742	Alaska
Arkansas	4	Florida	349	Connecticut
Alabama	3	Texas	234	District of Columbia
Florida	3	Alabama	182	Hawaii
Ohio	2	Pennsylvania	154	Illinois
Virginia	2	North Carolina	143	Iowa
Missouri	1	Ohio	138	Maine
Georgia	1	Arizona	120	Maryland
		Nevada	83	Massachusetts
		Louisiana	71	Michigan
		Tennessee	60	Minnesota
		Federal Bureau of Prisons	59	New Jersey
		Georgia	55	North Dakota
		Oklahoma	46	Rhode Island
		Mississippi	45	Vermont
		18 other states ^a	222	West Virginia
				Wisconsin
Total	23	Total	2,703	

^aThe 18 other states include New Mexico and Delaware. New Mexico repealed the death penalty for offenses committed on or after July 1, 2009. As of December 31, 2017, two male prisoners in New Mexico were under previously imposed death sentences. The Delaware Supreme Court has held that a portion of Delaware's death penalty sentencing statute (11 Del. C. § 4209) is unconstitutional (*Rauf v. State*, 145 A.3d 430 (Del. 2016)). No legislative action has been taken to amend the statute. As a result, capital cases are no longer pursued in Delaware. As of December 31, 2017, one male prisoner in Delaware remained under a previously imposed death sentence. Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics – Capital Punishment, 2017.

TABLE 2**Prisoners under sentence of death, by region, jurisdiction, and race, 2016 and 2017**

Region and jurisdiction ^c	Prisoners under sentence of death, 12/31/16			Received under sentence of death, 2017			Removed from death row (excluding executions), 2017 ^a			Executed, 2017 ^b			Prisoners under sentence of death, 12/31/17		
	Total ^d	White ^e	Black ^e	Total ^d	White ^e	Black ^e	Total ^d	White ^e	Black ^e	Total ^d	White ^e	Black ^e	Total ^d	White ^e	Black ^e
U.S. total	2,797	1,553	1,179	34	22	11	105	52	53	23	15	8	2,703	1,508	1,129
Federal ^f	58	30	27	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	59	32	26
State	2,739	1,523	1,152	32	20	11	104	52	52	23	15	8	2,644	1,476	1,103
Northeast	160	72	85	2	1	1	7	2	5	0	0	0	155	71	81
New Hamp.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
New York	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pennsylvania	159	72	84	2	1	1	7	2	5	0	0	0	154	71	80
Midwest	201	108	92	3	1	2	5	4	1	3	3	0	196	102	93
Indiana	13	10	3	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	10	7	3
Kansas	10	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	7	3
Missouri	25	17	8	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	24	17	7
Nebraska	10	8	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	8	3
Ohio	140	63	76	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	2	0	138	60	77
South Dakota	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0
South	1,370	708	644	10	5	5	75	33	42	20	12	8	1,285	668	599
Alabama	183	88	94	2	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	2	182	88	93
Arkansas	35	16	19	1	1	0	3	2	1	4	1	3	29	14	15
Delaware	13	5	8	0	0	0	12	5	7	0	0	0	1	0	1
Florida	382	232	149	2	0	2	32	14	18	3	3	0	349	215	133
Georgia	58	27	31	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	55	25	30
Kentucky	32	27	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	27	5
Louisiana	73	24	49	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	71	23	48
Mississippi	47	20	26	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	45	20	24
N. Carolina	150	63	80	0	0	0	7	5	2	0	0	0	143	58	78
Oklahoma	46	22	21	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	46	21	22
S. Carolina	37	16	21	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	35	16	19
Tennessee	63	32	30	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	60	32	27
Texas	244	132	108	4	3	1	7	2	5	7	5	2	234	128	102
Virginia	7	4	3	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	1	1	3	1	2
West	1,008	635	331	17	13	3	17	13	4	0	0	0	1,008	635	330
Arizona	119	95	18	4	2	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	120	94	19
California	742	439	271	9	7	2	9	8	1	0	0	0	742	438	272
Colorado	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Idaho	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9	0
Montana	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Nevada	81	48	31	4	4	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	83	51	30
New Mexico	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Oregon	32	28	3	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	30	27	2
Utah	9	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	7	1
Washington	9	5	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	8	5	3
Wyoming	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note: Some counts shown for year-end 2016 are revised from those reported in *Capital Punishment, 2016* (NCJ 251430, BJS web, April 2018). The revised counts include 5 prisoners who were either reported late to the National Prisoner Statistics program or were not in the custody of state correctional authorities on December 31, 2016 (1 in Alabama and 4 in California), and they exclude 23 prisoners who BJS has since learned were relieved of a death sentence before December 31, 2016 (15 in Pennsylvania, 4 in California, 2 in Nevada, and 1 each in Alabama and Oregon). Counts for December 31, 2016, also include 1 prisoner in Arizona who was erroneously reported as being removed from under sentence of death.

^aIncludes 21 deaths from natural causes (5 each in North Carolina and California; 2 each in Texas and Arizona; and 1 each in Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Nevada, and Washington), 2 deaths by suicide (1 each in Ohio and Oklahoma), and 1 death resulting from a traffic accident (Florida).

^bTwo of the white prisoners executed in Texas were of Hispanic or Latino origin; none of the black prisoners executed were of Hispanic or Latino origin. This is reflected in the U.S. and state totals.

^cBased on U.S. Census Bureau's regions and divisions of the United States. https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf

^dIncludes American Indians and Alaska Natives; Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Other Pacific Islanders; and persons of Hispanic or Latino origin for whom no other race was identified.

^eIncludes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin.

^fExcludes persons held under U.S. Armed Forces jurisdiction with a military death sentence for murder.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics – Capital Punishment, 2017.

TABLE 3**Average time between sentencing and execution, 1977–2017**

Year	Number executed	Average elapsed time from sentence to execution*
Total	1,465	143 mos.
1977	1	3
1978	0	:
1979	2	42
1980	0	:
1981	1	13
1982	2	53
1983	5	71
1984	21	74
1985	18	71
1986	18	87
1987	25	86
1988	11	80
1989	16	95
1990	23	95
1991	14	116
1992	31	114
1993	38	113
1994	31	122
1995	56	134
1996	45	125
1997	74	133
1998	68	130
1999	98	143
2000	85	137
2001	66	142
2002	71	127
2003	65	131
2004	59	132
2005	60	147
2006	53	145
2007	42	153
2008	37	139
2009	52	169
2010	46	178
2011	43	198
2012	43	190
2013	39	186
2014	35	218
2015	28	195
2016	20	204
2017	23	243

Note: In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated capital punishment statutes in several states (*Furman v. Georgia*, 408 U.S. 238 (1972)), effecting a moratorium on executions. Executions resumed in 1977, when the Supreme Court found that revisions to statutes in several states had effectively addressed the issues previously held unconstitutional (*Gregg v. Georgia*, 428 U.S. 153 (1976) and its companion cases).

:Not applicable.

*Average time was calculated from the most recent sentencing date.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics – Capital Punishment, 2017.



The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring crime, criminal victimization, criminal offenders, victims of crime, correlates of crime, and the operation of criminal and civil justice systems at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels. BJS collects, analyzes, and disseminates reliable statistics on crime and justice systems in the United States, supports improvements to state and local criminal justice information systems, and participates with national and international organizations to develop and recommend national standards for justice statistics. Jeffrey H. Anderson is the director.

The content in this report was compiled and prepared by Tracy L. Snell. Todd Minton verified the report.

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