



Statistical Brief

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Capital Punishment, 2014–2015

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This report provides information on persons under sentence of death on December 31, 2014, and December 31, 2015. It includes summary trends on the population of inmates under sentence of death, admissions and releases from death row, and the number of persons executed. Also, it includes advance counts on executions in 2016.

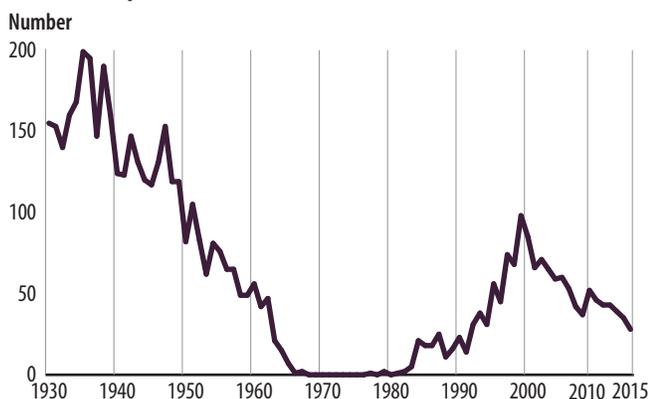
In 2014—

- At yearend, 34 states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) held 2,942 inmates under sentence of death, 41 fewer than at yearend 2013.
- Eighteen states and BOP received 69 inmates under sentence of death.
- Seven states executed 35 inmates.
- Twenty-two states and BOP removed 75 inmates from under sentence of death by means other than execution.
- Overall, 17 states held fewer inmates under sentence of death than a year earlier, 5 states and BOP held more inmates, and 13 states held the same number.
- The largest decline in inmates under sentence of death occurred in Missouri (down 11), followed by Tennessee (down 7), and Arizona and Georgia (each down 5).
- A judge vacated the death sentence of the one remaining inmate under sentence of death in Wyoming.

In 2015—

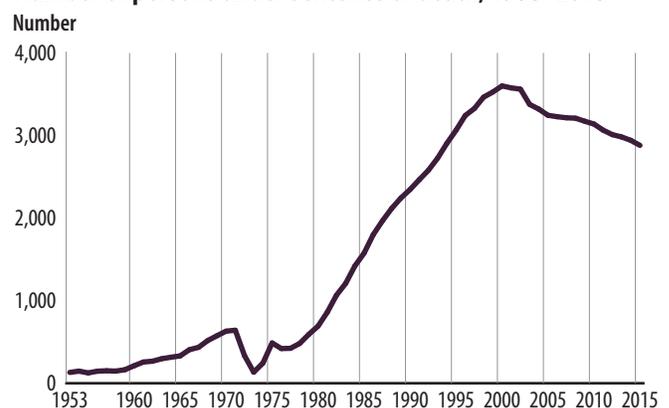
- At yearend, 33 states and the BOP held 2,881 inmates under sentence of death, 61 fewer than at yearend 2014.
- This was the fifteenth consecutive year in which the number of inmates under sentence of death decreased.
- Fourteen states and BOP received 49 inmates under sentence of death.
- Six states executed 28 inmates.
- Twenty-one states removed 82 inmates from under sentence of death by means other than execution.
- Overall, 20 states held fewer inmates under sentence of death than a year earlier, 5 states and BOP held more inmates, and 9 held the same number.
- The largest decline in inmates under sentence of death occurred in Texas (down 17), followed by Georgia (down 8), and Missouri (down 7).
- The governor of Maryland commuted the sentences of the four remaining inmates under sentence of death in the state.

FIGURE 1
Number of persons executed, 1930–2015



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Program (NPS-8), 1930–2015.

FIGURE 2
Number of persons under sentence of death, 1953–2015



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Program (NPS-8), 1953–2015.

FIGURE 3
Status of the death penalty, 2014–2015

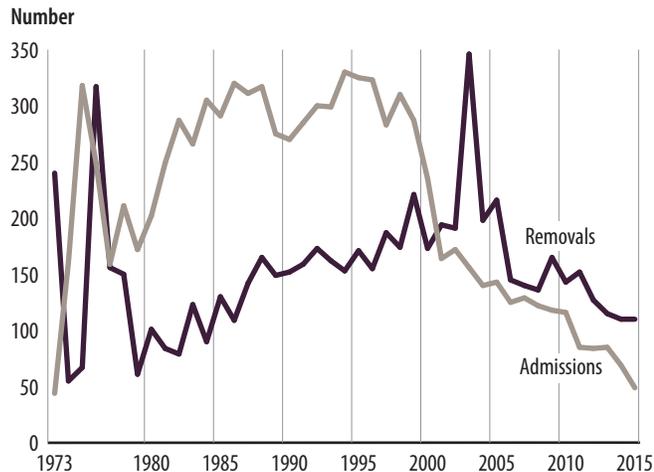
Executions				Number of prisoners under sentence of death on December 31				Jurisdictions without death penalty, 2015
2014		2015		2014		2015		
Missouri	10	Texas	13	California	740	California	739	Alaska
Texas	10	Missouri	6	Florida	394	Florida	390	District of Columbia
Florida	8	Georgia	5	Texas	271	Texas	254	Hawaii
Oklahoma	3	Florida	2	Alabama	193	Alabama	187	Illinois
Georgia	2	Oklahoma	1	Pennsylvania	186	Pennsylvania	181	Iowa
Ohio	1	Virginia	1	North Carolina	150	North Carolina	147	Maine
Arizona	1			Ohio	138	Ohio	137	Maryland
				Arizona	117	Arizona	119	Massachusetts
				Louisiana	85	Louisiana	82	Michigan
				Nevada	80	Nevada	82	Minnesota
				Georgia	79	Georgia	71	New Jersey
				Tennessee	69	Tennessee	67	North Dakota
				Federal Bureau of Prisons	58	Federal Bureau of Prisons	59	Rhode Island
				Mississippi	47	Mississippi	47	Vermont
				Oklahoma	47	Oklahoma	47	West Virginia
				20 other jurisdictions ^a	288	19 other jurisdictions ^b	272	Wisconsin
Total	35	Total	28	Total	2,942	Total	2,881	

^aNew Mexico repealed the death penalty for offenses committed after July 1, 2009. Connecticut repealed the death penalty for offenses committed after April 25, 2012. Maryland repealed the death penalty effective October 1, 2013. As of December 31, 2014, 2 men in New Mexico, 11 men in Connecticut, and 4 men in Maryland were under previously imposed death sentences.

^bIn 2015, the governor of Maryland commuted the death sentences of the remaining four inmates under sentence of death. The Nebraska legislature passed a bill to repeal the death penalty, but an appeal successfully stayed enactment until the state could hold a referendum on the issue. As of December 31, 2015, 2 men in New Mexico, 11 men in Connecticut, and 10 men in Nebraska were under previously imposed death sentences.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Program (NPS-8), 2014–2015.

FIGURE 4
Admissions and removals from under sentence of death, 1973–2015



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Program (NPS-8), 1973–2015.

Advance count of executions in 2016

From January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2016, five states executed 20 inmates, which was eight fewer inmates than the number executed in 2015. This was the smallest number of executions since 1991 when 14 inmates were executed.

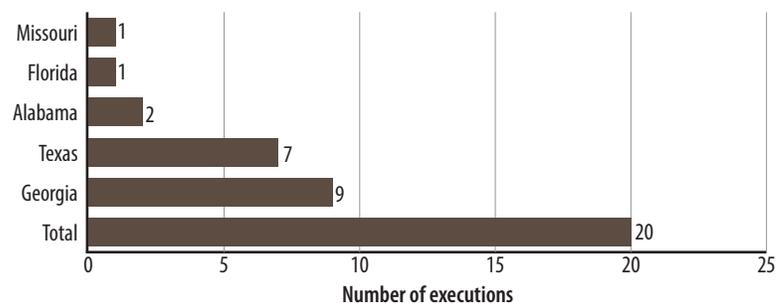
Two states accounted for 80% of the executions during this period: Georgia executed nine inmates, and Texas executed seven.

All executions in 2016 were by lethal injection.

No women were executed during this period.

FIGURE 5

Advance count of executions, January 1, 2016–December 31, 2016



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics Program (NPS-8), 2015.

Methodology

Capital punishment information is collected annually as part of the National Prisoner Statistics program (NPS-8). This data series is collected in two parts: (1) data on persons under sentence of death are obtained from the department of corrections in each jurisdiction currently authorizing capital punishment, and (2) the status of death penalty statutes is obtained from the Office of the Attorney General in each of the 50 states, the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of Columbia, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons for the federal government. Data collection forms are available at www.bjs.gov.

NPS-8 covers all persons under sentence of death at any time during the year who were held in a state or federal nonmilitary correctional facility. This includes capital offenders transferred from prison to mental hospitals and those who may have escaped from custody. It excludes persons whose death sentences have been overturned by the court, regardless of their current incarceration status.

The data in this report may differ from data collected by other organizations for several reasons:

- NPS-8 adds inmates to the population under sentence of death not at sentencing but at the time they are admitted to a state or federal correctional facility.
- If inmates entered prison under a death sentence or were reported as being relieved of a death sentence in one year but the court had acted in the previous year, the counts are adjusted to reflect the dates of court decisions.
- NPS counts are always for the last day of the calendar year and will differ from counts for more recent periods.



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 and valid 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. Jeri M. Mulrow is acting director.

This report was written by Tracy L. Snell. Elizabeth Davis verified the report.

Brigitte Coulton and Jill Thomas edited the report. Tina Dorsey produced the report.

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