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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executions in 2017</th>
<th>Number of prisoners under sentence of death</th>
<th>Jurisdictions without death penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>California 742</td>
<td>Alaska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Florida 349</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Texas 234</td>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Alabama 182</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Pennsylvania 154</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>North Carolina 143</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Ohio 138</td>
<td>Maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Arizona 120</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nevada 83</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Louisiana 71</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tennessee 60</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federal Bureau of Prisons 59</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Georgia 55</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oklahoma 46</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mississippi 45</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 other states</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 23</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 2,703

*The 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region and jurisdiction</th>
<th>Prisoners under sentence of death, 12/31/16</th>
<th>Received under sentence of death, 2017</th>
<th>Removed from death row (excluding executions), 2017</th>
<th>Executed, 2017</th>
<th>Prisoners under sentence of death, 12/31/17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. total</td>
<td>Total 2,797 1,553 1,179</td>
<td>Total 34 22 11</td>
<td>Total 105 52 53</td>
<td>Total 23 15 8</td>
<td>Total 2,703 1,508 1,129</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2 0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>104 52 52</td>
<td>23 15 8</td>
<td>2,644 1,476 1,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>160 72 85</td>
<td>2 1 1</td>
<td>7 2 5</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>155 71 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>1 0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
<td>154 71 80</td>
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<td>5 4 1</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
<td>10 7 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>10 7 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1 0 1</td>
<td>1 1 0</td>
<td>24 17 7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>11 8 3</td>
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<td>1 1 0</td>
<td>2 2 0</td>
<td>138 60 77</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3 3 3</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>3 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>1,370 708 644</td>
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<td>75 33 42</td>
<td>20 12 8</td>
<td>1,285 668 599</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2 1 1</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>3 1 2</td>
<td>182 88 93</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3 2 1</td>
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<td>12 5 7</td>
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</tr>
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<td>349 215 133</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1 1 0</td>
<td>55 25 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>2 0 2</td>
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<td>45 20 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Carolina</td>
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<td>7 5 2</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
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<td>1 1 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>46 21 22</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2 0 2</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>35 16 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
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<td>60 32 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7 2 5</td>
<td>7 5 2</td>
<td>234 128 102</td>
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<td>3 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17 13 4</td>
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<td>1,008 635 330</td>
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<td>9 9 0</td>
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<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>2 2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
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<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>83 51 30</td>
</tr>
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<td>2 2 0</td>
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<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>1 0 1</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, 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.

Includes 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).

Two 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.

Based 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](https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf)

Includes 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.

Includes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin.

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number executed</th>
<th>Average elapsed time from sentence to execution*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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.

Edrienne Su edited the report. Carrie Epps produced the report.

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