



Department of Justice



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NUMBER OF DEATH ROW INMATES DECLINED FOR FOURTH YEAR DURING 2004

WASHINGTON, D.C. — There were 3,315 state and federal death row inmates on December 31, 2004, — 63 fewer than on the same date in 2003, the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) announced today. The 2004 decline represents the fourth year in which the number of prisoners under death sentences decreased — 3,601 were on death row at the end of 2000; 3,577 at the end of 2001; 3,562 in 2002 and 3,378 at the end of 2003.

During 2004, 125 inmates entered prison with death sentences, which was the lowest number since 44 were admitted in 1973. This was the second year in which death row admissions dropped — 169 were admitted in 2002 and 152 in 2003.

Among the 38 states with capital punishment laws as of December 2004, California held the most death row inmates (637), followed by Texas (446), Florida (364) and Pennsylvania (222). The federal Bureau of Prisons held 33 inmates. Twelve states and the District of Columbia do not authorize capital punishment.

During 2004, 12 states executed 59 prisoners, six fewer than in 2003. The inmates executed had been under a death sentence for an average of 11 years, which was one month longer than the period for inmates executed in 2003. The new BJS report also noted that:

- All 59 persons executed during 2004 were men. Thirty-nine were white (three of whom were Hispanic), 19 were black and one was Asian. Fifty-eight were given lethal injection and one was electrocuted.
- During 2004, Texas executed 23 inmates; Ohio seven; Oklahoma six; Virginia five; North and South Carolina four each; Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Nevada two each and Arkansas and Maryland one each.
- Of those awaiting execution on December 31, 2004, 56 percent were white, 42 percent black, and 2 percent of other races.

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- The 367 Hispanic inmates under sentence of death were 13 percent of all prisoners for whom the ethnicity was known.
- Fifty-two women were under a death sentence at the end of 2004, five more than the year before.
- Preliminary data for 2005 show that 13 states executed 49 inmates from January 1 through November 9; all were given lethal injections. Texas executed 17, followed by Indiana and Missouri with five, and Alabama and Oklahoma with four each.
- From January 1, 1977, through December 31, 2004, 32 states and the federal government executed 944 prisoners.
- Of the 7,187 people under sentence of death between 1977 and 2004, 13 percent had been executed, 4 percent died by causes other than execution, 37 percent were removed from death row for various reasons and 46 percent were still on death row as of last December 31.

At the end of 2004, 14 states had laws that specified a minimum age of less than 18 years old for which a death sentence could be imposed. Six states had no minimum age. Among inmates with death sentences for whom their arrest age data was available, 63 were 17 years old or younger when they were arrested for their capital offense.

Four states revised statutory provisions relating to the death penalty during 2004. One state revised its statute to exclude mentally retarded persons from capital sentencing. Two states enacted laws increasing the age of eligibility for a death sentence to 18 years at the time the murder was committed. One state repealed the use of the firing squad for all persons sentenced to death on or after May 3, 2004.

The report, "Capital Punishment, 2004" (NCJ-211349), was written by BJS statisticians Thomas P. Bonczar and Tracy L. Snell. Following publication this document can be accessed at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/cp04.htm.

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

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