

Up For Discussion - The Death Penalty

Below you will find different types of information about the death penalty in the USA.
Interpret and discuss the information and facts.

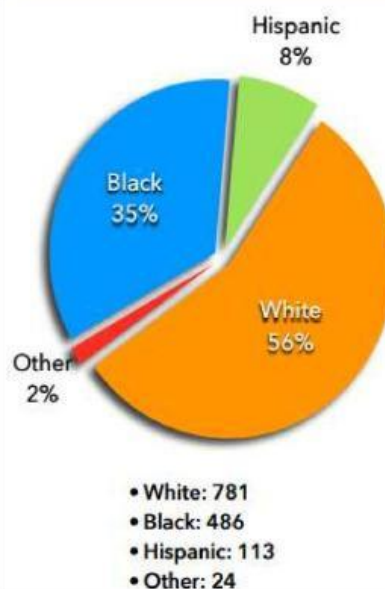
Definition

Capital punishment or the death penalty is a legal process whereby a person is put to death by the state as a punishment for a crime. The judicial decree that someone be punished in this manner is a death sentence, while the actual enforcement is an execution. Crimes that can result in a death penalty are known as capital crimes or capital offenses. The term capital originates from the Latin *capitalis*, literally "regarding the head" (referring to execution by beheading).

Moral and ethical dilemmas

- Should physicians participate in executions?
- Should prisoners on death row be accepted as organ donors?
- Should people be sentenced to death in a modern society? What signals are we sending our children?

RACE OF DEFENDANTS EXECUTED



Historical methods:

- Burning
- Crushing
- Breaking on wheel
- Bludgeoning
- Hanging
- Shooting
- Electrocution
- Gassing

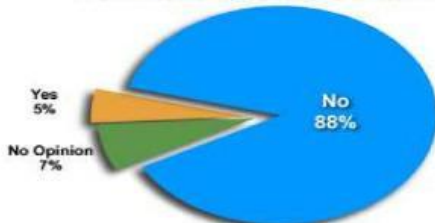
Current methods:

- Lethal injection
- Firing squad
- Gas chamber
- Hanging
- Electrocution

(NB! The last four current methods are very rarely/never used!)

DETERRENCE

Do executions lower homicide rates?

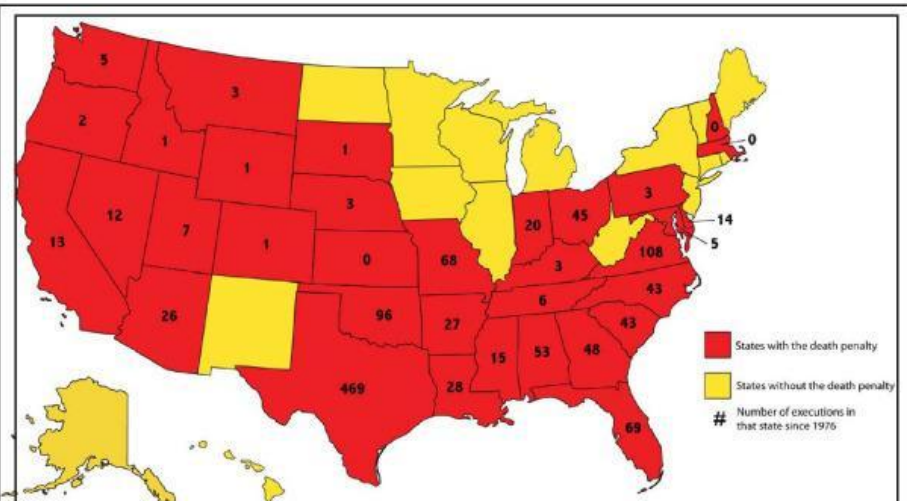


Pros:

- Retribution or justice
- Rehabilitation
- Closure or vindication
- Deterrence
- Preventing of re-offending
- Incentive for helping the police

Cons:

- Value of human life
- Execution of the innocent
- Deterrence
- It's too expensive
- Unfair application
- It's unnecessary
- The right to live
- Retribution is wrong
- It brutalises society
- Cruel, inhumane or degrading



Number of executions in the United States since 1976. Figure: Harrison Lott, GCCH

INNOCENCE

Death Row Exonerations By State Total: 151



- Since 1973, over 140 people have been released from death row with evidence of their innocence. (Staff Report, House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil & Constitutional Rights, 1993, with updates from DPIC).
- From 1973-1999, there was an average of 3 exonerations per year. From 2000-2011, there was an average of 5 exonerations per year.

Sources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment_in_the_United_States#Methods

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/capitalpunishment/>

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/FactSheet.pdf>