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.

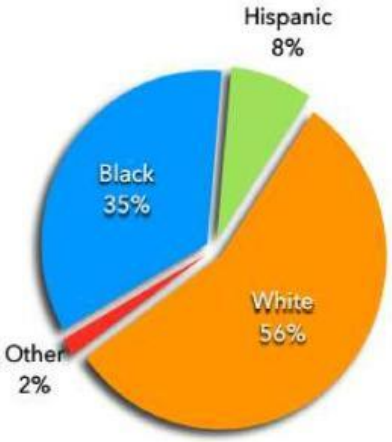
Definition

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



- White: 781
- Black: 486
- Hispanic: 113
- Other: 24

Historical methods:

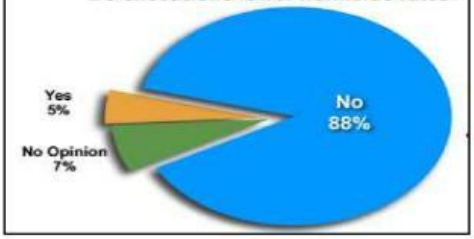
- Burning
- Crushing
- Breaking on wheel
- Bludgeoning
- Hanging
- Shooting
- Electrocution
- Gassing

Current methods:

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

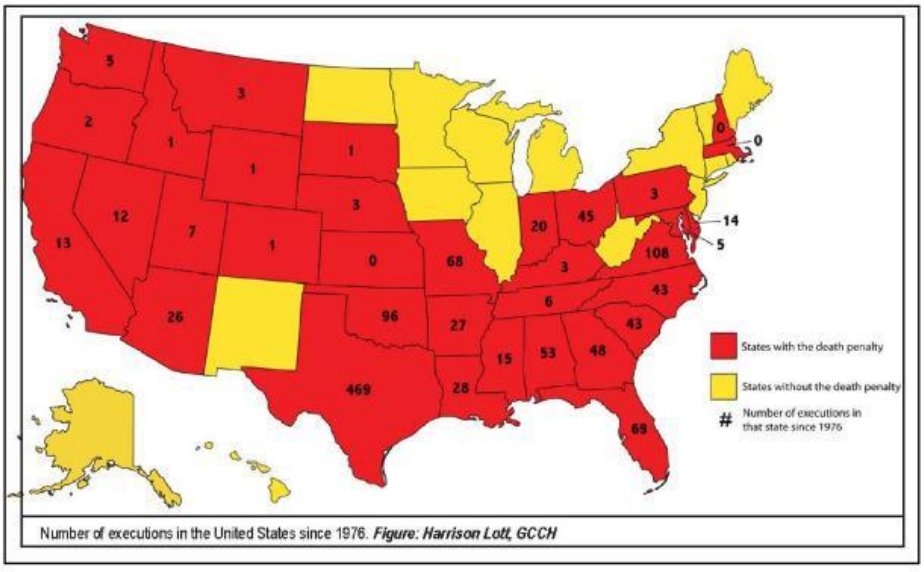
(**NB!** The last four *current* methods are very rarely/never used!)

DETERRENCE



Pros:

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

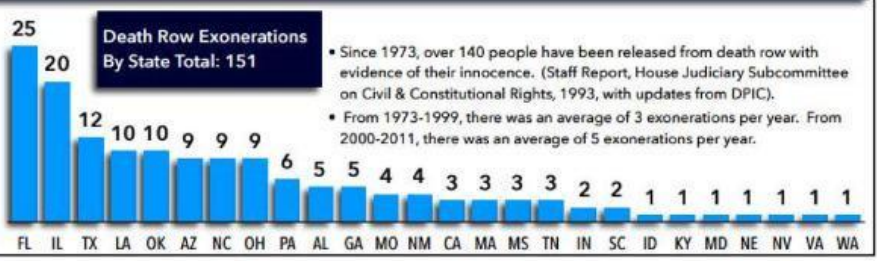


Number of executions in the United States since 1976. ***Figure: Harrison Lott, GCCH***

Cons:

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

INNOCENCE



- 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.

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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

LIVEWORKSHEETS