

STUDENT HANDOUT:

Death Penalty Data (as of 2002)

(from Religious Tolerance and The Moratorium Campaign)

- The United States is one of the few developed countries in the world to still use capital punishment. Japan and South Korea are the only established democracies in the world, other than the U.S., which still conduct executions.
- There have been 784 executions in the US from 1976, when the U.S. Supreme Court authorized the resumption of the use of the death penalty (after banning it in 1972), until July 2002. About 30 to 60 prisoners are currently executed annually, most by lethal injection.
- Each state can decide whether or not to have the death penalty. As of October 2002, only 12 states and the District of Columbia do not have the death penalty, and two states (Illinois and Maryland) have declared a moratorium on executions (see <http://www.moratorium2000.org/facts/statebystate.lasso> for more on moratoriums).
- The states that do NOT have the death penalty are: Alaska, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.
- Seven jurisdictions have the death penalty but have not performed any executions since 1976: Connecticut, Kansas, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, South Dakota, and the U.S. military.
- About two out of three executions (65.6%) are conducted in five states: Texas, Virginia, Missouri, Florida, and Oklahoma. Texas leads the other states in number of killings (256 killings; 34% of the national total).
- A Broken System, Part II: Why There is So Much Error in Capital Cases, and What Can be Done About It. This landmark study by the Columbia University Law School examined every death penalty appeal between 1973-1995 and found that 68% of them were overturned because of serious errors.
- April 2002 -- 100th inmate on death row declared not guilty. DNA evidence proved that former postman Ray Krone did not kill an Arizona bartender. The evidence proved that a convicted sex offender was actually guilty. Krone is the 100th inmate to be declared not guilty in the U.S. since 1973.
- The American Bar Association (ABA) has reported that over 90% of those on death row couldn't afford their own attorney at trial and were appointed counsel.
- Over 82 percent of those on death row were convicted of killing a white person. People of color make up more than 50 percent of all homicide victims in the U.S. 43 percent of those on death row are black. 12 percent of the U.S. population is black. 1.5% of those sentenced to death row are women.

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