



The Death Penalty in Harris County

(As of June 1, 2018)

- New death sentences in Texas have **dropped dramatically** since peaking in 1999, when juries sentenced 48 people to death. Since 2015, prosecutors have sought death in twenty-two cases, resulting in 12 new death sentences. This year, juries have imposed two new death sentences (Hardin and Tom Green Counties) and rejected the death penalty in two cases.
- While Harris County is **Texas' top sentencing county**, it has not imposed any new death sentences since 2014.
- Overall, Harris County prosecutors have secured **death sentences for 294 people** since 1974.
- There are 80 inmates still on death row who were convicted in Harris County; this constitutes **more than one-third of the current Texas death row population**.
- In the mid-1990's, Harris County juries **typically sent 13-15 people to death row each year**.
- **15 of the last 18 defendants sentenced to death in Harris County are African American** – the other three defendants are Hispanic. The last death sentence imposed on a white defendant in Harris County occurred in November 2004.
- In the 1990's, the Harris County District Attorney's Office was over **three times more likely** to seek the death penalty against African American defendants than similarly situated white defendants.
- Harris County accounts for 128 executions since 1982, **more than any state in the country besides Texas** and twice as many as any other county.
- Since 1973, **162 individuals** – including 13 people in Texas – have been released from death rows nationwide due to evidence of their wrongful conviction. On June 8, 2015, the Harris County District Attorney's Office dismissed capital murder charges against **Alfred Dewayne Brown** after determining there was insufficient evidence to support another conviction. Brown spent a decade on death row as an innocent man. Prosecutors had withheld important phone records that corroborated his alibi. Brown is the third death row exonoree out of Harris County.
- According to the Houston Area Survey for 2016, conducted by the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, just 27 percent of respondents think the death penalty, rather than life imprisonment, is the most appropriate punishment for murder.