

## The Death Penalty in Harris County

- New death sentences in Texas have **decreased precipitously** since peaking in 1999, when juries sentenced 48 people to death. In the mid-1990s, Harris County juries sent **as many as 15 people to death row** each year.
- Overall, Harris County prosecutors have secured death sentences for **295 people** since 1974.
- While Harris County remains Texas' top sentencing county, jurors there have imposed just **one new death sentence in the last four years**.
- There are **78 inmates** on death row who were convicted in Harris County; this constitutes more than one-third of the current Texas death row population.
- Two individuals convicted in Harris County received reduced sentences in 2018; **the two men each spent more than 30 years on death row**.
- **All of the last 19 defendants** sentenced to death in Harris County are people of color (15 are African-American, 3 are Hispanic, and 1 belongs to another race/ethnicity). The last death sentence imposed on a white defendant in Harris County came in November 2004.
- In the 1990s, 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 **129 executions** since 1982, more than any state in the country besides Texas and twice as many as any other county.
- Since 1973, **163 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 exoneree 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.

1/1/2019