

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. There currently are eight cases in which the Harris County District Attorney plans to seek death.
- While Harris County remains the top sentencing county in Texas, jurors there have imposed just **one new death sentence in the last four years**.
- There are **77 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 **130 executions** since 1982, more than any state in the country besides Texas and twice as many as any other county.
- **Of the 13 death row exonerees in Texas, 3 were convicted in Harris County.** Most recently, Alfred Dewayne Brown was declared "actually innocent" after spending a decade on death row. Prosecutors withheld important phone records that corroborated his alibi.
- According to the Houston Area Survey for 2016, conducted by the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, only **27 percent of respondents** think the death penalty, rather than life imprisonment, is the most appropriate punishment for murder.

07/01/19