

The Death Penalty in Harris County

- Harris County prosecutors have secured death sentences for **298 people** since 1974, more than any other county.
- In the 1990s, Harris County juries routinely sent **as many as 15 people to death row** each year.
- While Harris County remains the top sentencing county in Texas, jurors there have imposed just **three new death sentences since 2019**. Most recently, a jury sentenced Robert Solis to death in October 2022. He represented himself at trial and did not call any witnesses during the punishment phase.
- There are **67 people on death row** who were convicted in Harris County; this constitutes more than one-third of Texas's current death row population.
- **21 of the last 22 defendants** sentenced to death in Harris County are people of color (16 are Black, four are Hispanic, and one identifies with another non-white race/ethnicity).
- In the 1990s, the Harris County District Attorney's Office was **three times more likely** to seek the death penalty against Black defendants than similarly situated white defendants.
- Harris County accounts for **133 executions** since 1982, more than any state in the country except Texas and twice as many as any other county. This includes two executions in 2023.
- Since 2019, **31 individuals have been removed from death row** due to sentence reductions, overturned convictions, or deaths in custody; **one-third of those cases** came from Harris County.
- **Of the 16 death row exonerees in Texas, four were convicted in Harris County.** In 2019, Alfred Dewayne Brown was declared "actually innocent" of the crime for which he spent a decade on death row; he was released in 2015 after charges against him were dropped. Prosecutors withheld important phone records that corroborated his alibi.
- According to the Houston Area Survey for 2020, conducted by the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, only **20 percent of Houstonians** think the death penalty, rather than life imprisonment, is the most appropriate punishment for murder.

01/01/24