

The Death Penalty in Harris County

- Harris County prosecutors have secured death sentences for **300 people** since 1974, more than any other county in Texas.
- In the 1990s, Harris County juries routinely sent more than **a dozen people to death row** each year. While Harris County remains the top sentencing county in Texas, the pace of death sentences has declined significantly over the past decade. Jurors have sent **three new individuals to death row since 2021, including two in 2025**. It was the first time since 2014 that Harris County jurors sent more than one person to death row in the same year.
- There are **61 people on death row** who were convicted in Harris County; this constitutes more than one-third of Texas's current death row population. Of these, more than 40 people have spent more than 20 years on death row.
- **23 of the last 24 defendants** sentenced to death in Harris County are people of color (17 are Black, five are Hispanic/Latino, and one is another non-white race/ethnicity).
- The cost of the death penalty impacts taxpayers. Harris County spent over **\$1.8 million** in taxpayer funds for the death penalty trial of Xavier Davis last year.
- Harris County accounts for **136 executions** since 1982, more than any state in the country except Texas and twice as many as any other county. The first person executed in 2026 – Charles Thompson – was convicted in Harris County.
- Since 2021, Texas's death row population has declined by 30 people due to sentence reductions and overturned convictions (17) or deaths in custody (13). **Thirty-six percent of these cases were tried in Harris County**. In 2026, Harris County resentenced Clarence Jordan, **an intellectually disabled man who had spent 48 years on death row**, most of which without any legal representation.
- **Of the 18 death row exonerees in Texas, five 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. Prosecutors had withheld important phone records that corroborated his alibi. He was released in 2015 after charges against him were dropped.
- 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.

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