

# DEATH PENALTY ABOLITION MOMENTUM

## A CATHOLIC CALL TO ACTION

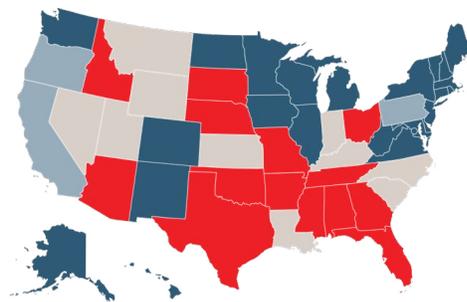
**“To oppose the death penalty is not to be ‘soft on crime.’ Rather, it is to be strong on the dignity of life.”**

*(Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, and Bishop Frank J. Dewane)*

As a global Church, we have been called to educate, advocate, and pray for the abolition of capital punishment. **You can take part in this holy work.** Find out how you can join Catholic Mobilizing Network to end the death penalty once and for all: [catholicsmobilizing.org](https://catholicsmobilizing.org)

## REPEALS AND MORATORIA

**STATE:** As of August 2021, 23 states have abolished the death penalty and three others are under governor-declared execution bans. More than two-thirds of U.S. states – 36 out of 50 – have either outlawed capital punishment or have not carried out an execution in at least 10 years.



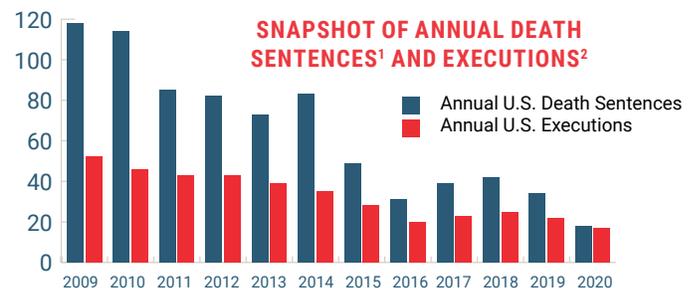
### ABOLITION STATUS BY STATE

- Abolition states
- Moratorium states
- Death penalty states that haven't had an execution in 10+ years
- Active death penalty states

**FEDERAL:** President Biden's Department of Justice declared an official moratorium on federal executions in July 2021. However, given that the Trump administration overrode a 17-year “de facto” moratorium in order to resume federal executions in 2020, advocates are pushing for stronger action from the Biden administration to dismantle the federal death penalty. Learn more: [catholicsmobilizing.org/federal-death-penalty-information](https://catholicsmobilizing.org/federal-death-penalty-information)

## DECLINING EXECUTIONS AND DEATH SENTENCES

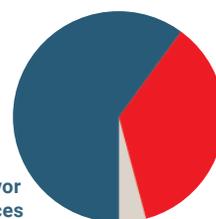
The past several decades have shown a nationwide decline in the use of capital punishment. The year 2021 marked the fifth consecutive year with fewer than 30 executions and 50 death sentences nationwide.



## WANING PUBLIC SUPPORT

The death penalty is falling out of favor among Americans, with Catholics opposing the practice at a higher rate than the general public.

60% Americans Favor Alternative Sentences



36% Americans Favor Death Penalty

A higher percentage of Americans oppose capital punishment than at any other time in the modern history of the U.S. death penalty.<sup>3</sup>

4% No Opinion

# CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

## DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE

"The death penalty is inadmissible because it is an 'attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person' and [the Church] works with determination for its abolition worldwide." (Catholic Catechism 2267)

## INNOCENCE

Since 1973, at least 185 innocent people in the U.S. have been exonerated from death row.<sup>4</sup>



For every 9 people executed in the U.S., one person on death row has been exonerated.

## RACIAL BIAS

People of color are disproportionately represented on death row, especially those convicted of killing white victims.

Persons Executed for Black/White Interracial Murders in the U.S. Since 1976<sup>2</sup>



## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

The death penalty targets vulnerable populations, including those who are poor and those who experience mental illness, intellectual disability, brain damage, and/or chronic trauma.

# 100%

Every person executed in 2020 had one or more significant mental or emotional impairments or was under age 21 at the time of the crime for which they were executed.<sup>5</sup>

## ARBITRARINESS

The U.S. death penalty is geographically arbitrary, with over half of the executions carried out since 1976 originating in just 2% of American counties.<sup>6</sup>

2% of U.S. Counties



56% of U.S. Death Row



## COST

State-based studies consistently find that the death penalty is more expensive than alternative sentences such as life without parole.



A 2011 study in California showed death penalty cases are 20 times more expensive than other comparable cases.<sup>7</sup>

1. "Death sentences in the United States since 1977." Death Penalty Information Center, [deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/sentencing-data/death-sentences-in-the-united-states-from-1977-by-state-and-by-year](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/sentencing-data/death-sentences-in-the-united-states-from-1977-by-state-and-by-year)

2. "Execution Database." Death Penalty Information Center, [deathpenaltyinfo.org/executions/execution-database](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/executions/execution-database).

3. "Americans Now Support Life in Prison Over Death Penalty." Gallup, [news.gallup.com/poll/268514/americans-support-life-prison-death-penalty.aspx](https://news.gallup.com/poll/268514/americans-support-life-prison-death-penalty.aspx)

4. "Innocence." Death Penalty Information Center, [deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/innocence](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/policy-issues/innocence)

5. "The Death Penalty in 2020: Year End Report." Death Penalty Information Center, [deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/dpic-reports/dpic-year-end-reports/the-death-penalty-in-2020-year-end-report](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/dpic-reports/dpic-year-end-reports/the-death-penalty-in-2020-year-end-report)

6. Dieter, Richard C. Death Penalty Information Center, 2013, p. 10, The 2% Death Penalty: How a Minority of Counties Produce Most Death Cases At Enormous Costs to All.

7. "California Cost Study 2011." Death Penalty Information Center, [deathpenaltyinfo.org/stories/california-cost-study-2011](https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/stories/california-cost-study-2011)