

Sourcebook of criminal justice statistics Online

Table 6.77

Prisoners under sentence of death

By demographic characteristics, prior felony conviction history, and legal status, United States, on Dec. 31, 1996 and 1997^a

Characteristic	1996	1997
Total number	3,219	3,335
Sex		
Male	98.5%	98.7%
Female	1.5	1.3
Race		
White	56.5	56.3
Black	41.9	42.2
Other	1.6	1.6
Hispanic origin		
Hispanic	8.8	9.2
Non-Hispanic	91.2	90.8
Age^b		
17 years or younger	(c)	0
18 to 19 years	0.5	(c)
20 to 24 years	8.7	8.2
25 to 29 years	14.9	14.9
30 to 34 years	18.5	17.3
35 to 39 years	21.8	21.8
40 to 44 years	14.9	15.6
45 to 49 years	10.6	10.6
50 to 54 years	5.7	6.5
55 to 59 years	2.5	2.6
60 years and older	1.8	1.9
Education		
Grade 8 or less	14.4	14.2
Grades 9 to 11	37.5	37.6
High school graduate/GED	37.8	38.0
Any college	10.2	10.1
Marital status		
Married	24.9	24.5
Divorced or separated	21.3	21.3
Widowed	2.7	2.6
Never married	51.1	51.5
Prior felony conviction history		
Prior felony conviction	65.7	65.3
No prior felony conviction	34.3	34.7
Prior homicide conviction history		
Prior homicide conviction	8.6	8.6
No prior homicide conviction	91.4	91.4
Legal status at time of capital offense		
Charges pending	7.3	7.6
Probation	10.0	10.1
Parole	20.0	19.5
Prison escapee	1.4	1.3
Incarcerated	2.4	2.6
Other status	1.1	1.0
None	57.7	58.0

Note: Thirty-eight States and the Federal Government had death penalty statutes in effect at yearend 1996 and 1997. Percents are based on those cases for which data were reported. The U.S. military also has a death penalty provision, however, the Bureau of Justice Statistics does not collect data for persons under military death sentence.

^aPercents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

^bThe youngest person under sentence of death in 1996 was a black male in Nevada born in May 1979 and sentenced to death in June 1996. The youngest person under sentence of death in 1997 was a black male in Alabama born in November 1979 and sentenced to death in October 1997. The oldest person under sentence of death in both 1996 and 1997 was a white male in Arizona born in September 1915 and sentenced to death in June 1983.

^cLess than 0.5%.

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Capital Punishment 1996*, Bulletin NCJ-167031, p. 8, Table 7; p. 9; p. 10, Table 9; and *1997*, Bulletin NCJ-172881, p. 8, Table 7; p. 9; p. 10, Table 9 (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice). Table adapted by SOURCEBOOK staff.