

A Broken System: Error Rates in Capital Cases

State Report Card

PENNSYLVANIA, 1979-1995

History

First Death Sentence	1979
First Direct Appeal	1981
First Consensual Execution	1995
First Non-Consensual Execution	NONE

Sentences and Executions

Total Number of Death Sentences	274
Total Number of Executions	2
Percentage of Death Sentences Carried Out	1%

Error Rates

State Direct Appeal

Number Reviewed on Direct Appeal	200
Number Reversed on Direct Appeal	56
Percentage Reversed on Direct Appeal	28%
Number Awaiting Direct Appeal	74
Percentage Awaiting Direct Appeal	27%
Number Forward to State Post-Conviction	144

State Post-Conviction

Number Reviewed on Post-Conviction	Unknown
Number Reversed on Post-Conviction	□1
Percentage Reversed on Post-Conviction	□1%
Number Forward to Federal Habeas Corpus	Unknown

State Direct Appeal and State Post-Conviction Combined

Overall Rate of Error Found by State Courts	□29%
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Federal Habeas Corpus

Number Reviewed on Habeas Corpus	5
Number Reversed on Habeas Corpus	2
Percentage Reversed on Habeas Corpus	40%

Overall Rates Including [and Excluding] State Post-Conviction

Overall Error Rate	57% [57%]
Overall Success Rate	43% [43%]

Time

Time From First Death Sentence to First Non-Consensual Execution	N/A
Average Time from Sentence to Execution	11.50
Average Time from Sentence to Final Federal Relief	10.00

Sentencing and Execution Rates

Death Sentences per 1000 Homicides	16.73
Death Sentences per 100,000 Population	2.30
Death Sentences per 1000 Prison Population	17.47
Non-Consensual Executions per 1000 Homicides	0.00
Non-Consensual Executions per 100,000 Population	0.00
Non-Consensual Executions per 1000 Prison Population	0.00

Demographic Information

Average Population	11,904,777
Average Homicides	712
Average Homicide Rate per 100,000 Population	5.98
Average Prison Admissions	4,306
Average Prison Population	15,684
Percentage Population Non-White	11%

Court Factors

Political Pressure (judicial elections)	6
Party Competition (gubernatorial elections)	2
State Court Criminal Caseload per 1000 Population	13.40
Expenditures per Capita on Courts	40.17

Sources: DRCen; Death Row U.S.A., Winter 2000; DADB; HCDB; Appendix C; USCen; UCRDB; USCen; PrisCen; PolPres; CtCaLd; CtExpn