

A Statistical Overview of the Kentucky Death Penalty

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Abstract:

In the years since 1975, when the state of Kentucky established its modern death penalty system, the state has condemned 82 individuals to die, resulting in three executions. Any assessment of the value of the punishment must contend with certain facts. First, use of the death penalty has been unequal with respect to race, particularly that of the victim. Cases with white victims are more than five times as likely to see a death sentence as those with black victims, and those with white female victims are 11 times as likely to see a death sentence as those with black male victims. When the offender is black and the victim a white female, odds are more than 20 times greater for a death sentence than in cases where both are black. These extraordinary racial disparities call into question the equity of the entire system, but they are not the only flaws. The death penalty is extremely rare; of more than 10,500 homicides in the post-1975 period, just three (0.03 percent) have led to an execution, and 82 (0.77 percent) have led to a death sentence. Of the 82 death sentences imposed, 41 have been reversed, eight have ended in natural death, 30 have resulted in the individual remaining on death row, often decades after the crime, and just three have resulted in execution. Individuals sentenced to death are 14 times more likely to have their sentence reversed than be executed. The average age of those on death row has risen from approximately 30 in 1976 to more than 60 today. Finally, the punishment is not handed down proportionately across the counties of the state. Overall, this assessment reveals a number of flaws in the use of the ultimate punishment. Because of its comprehensive scope, dealing with the entire modern period, and every death sentence, it should ignite a conversation about what is the criminal justice value of a system that is so racially biased, ineffective, prone to error, and unreliable.

Keywords: Capital punishment, death penalty, homicide, racial disparities, geography, Kentucky

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Introduction

Any death penalty system should be assessed based on its actual functioning, not on how anyone might wish or hope it would function. In this report, I provide relevant facts and figures relating to the history of use of the death penalty in Kentucky with a focus on the “modern” period, since 1975 when the current death penalty system was created.¹

In 2018, I published a book providing a “statistical portrait” of the U.S. death penalty system; facts and figures about capital punishment, particularly focused on trends over time and other quantifiable indicators about the actual functioning of the U.S. death penalty system (see Baumgartner et al. 2018). In the period since then, I have established a national database with information on every death sentence imposed since 1973. While this database is not perfectly complete (information about certain facts about every case could not be found), it provides information about 8,691 individuals, including the county of their conviction; the dates of birth, crime, death sentence, and removal from death row; race and gender of the offender; and the eventual outcome of the case or its current status as of 2021. Associated with this work, I have also compiled information from the Centers for Disease Control and the FBI about homicides, linking them to the year and the county where they were committed. This work has supported several peer reviewed publications (Baumgartner Box-Steffensmeier and Campbell 2018, Baumgartner et al. 2020) and is the most complete such set of records currently available. In this report, I examine this accumulated statistical information for the state of Kentucky. My hope is to provide relevant facts to allow a fair assessment of the value of the system as it has functioned over the entire time period.

¹ The US Supreme Court invalidated all state death penalty systems in 1972 with its *Furman v. Georgia* decision. Kentucky, like other states, was forced to revise its statute to meet new safeguards for proportionality and other factors. The “modern” death penalty refers to this post-1975 system.

Racial disparities

Kentucky has sentenced 82 individuals to die in the years since 1975; 79 have been men and 3 women. The racial breakdown of these death-sentenced individuals is 63 white (76.8 percent), 18 black (21.9 percent), and one Latinx (1.2 percent). Table 1 summarizes the patterns associated with race and gender of offenders and victims in Kentucky homicides (1976 to 2019) and death sentences. Of course, every homicide is not death-eligible, and the aggregate comparison of homicides with death sentences in general does not allow a micro-level comparison of the facts of the crime and other relevant factors that might determine why a particular individual receives a death sentence and another does not. Still, looking at aggregate patterns can allow some assessment of which cases tend, on average, to be considered among the “worst of the worst” and therefore result in capital prosecutions. These comparisons are therefore of great interest.

Table 1 compares homicide cases, of which there were over 10,000 in Kentucky during the period of study, with the 82 death sentences imposed in the state. It shows the race and sex of the offenders, then those characteristics of the victims, and finally the different offender-victim combinations. For each group in the table, it shows the number of homicide cases as well as the percentage that these represent of the total. The last row calculates the “death sentencing rate” which is simply the number, per 100 such homicides, who are sentenced to death. The first row, shows, for example, that of 9,803 homicide offenders, 82 received a death sentence, and the rate therefore is 0.84, or just less than one percent of all homicide offenders.

The comparison of homicide rates within each category is of primary interest. If race and gender were not consequential in determining which cases are more likely to lead to a sentence of death, then all of the rates would be roughly similar, give or take some random fluctuation. Note that when we compare offenders, there are 82 death sentences out of 9,803 individuals who have committed homicide, but when we look at the victims from those same cases, there are 135

victims from death sentenced cases out of 10,342 homicide victims overall. The rate by victim is therefore 1.31 and the rate by offender is 0.84.

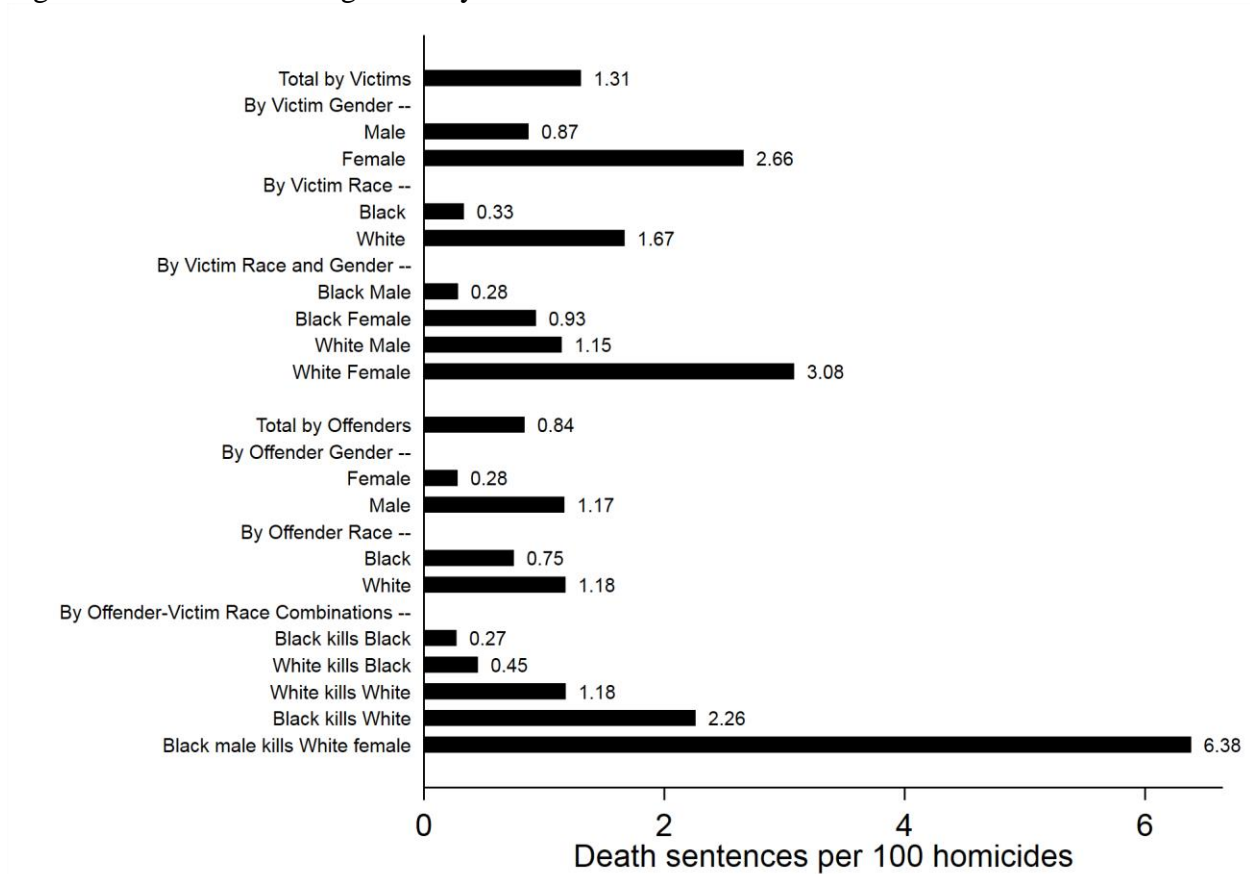
When we look at this death-sentencing rate across the different categories, we see that it differs dramatically by race and gender, suggesting significant systematic tendencies to reserve capital punishment for cases involving white victims. Reading down the last column of the Table shows, for example, that male offenders are sentenced to death in 1.17 percent of all homicide cases, but female offenders are so sentenced in only 0.28 percent of the cases. That means that, on average, male offenders are more than 4 times as likely to be sentenced to death as female homicide offenders ($1.17 / 0.28 = 4.18$). Following Table 1, Figure 1 summarizes these differences in death sentencing rates.

Table 1. Race and gender characteristics of homicides and death sentences compared.

	Homicides		Death Sentences		Rate per 100 Homicides
Number of Offenders	9,803	%	82	%	0.84
Male Offenders	6,762	86.3	79	96.3	1.17
Female Offenders	1,072	13.7	3	3.7	0.28
Total by Sex of Offender	7,834	100.0	82	100.0	1.05
White Offenders	5,354	69.0	63	77.8	1.18
Black Offenders	2,406	31.0	18	22.2	0.75
Total White or Black Offenders	7,760	100.0	81	100.0	1.04
Number of Victims	10,342	%	135	%	1.31
Male Victims	7,810	75.6	68	50.4	0.87
Female Victims	2,519	24.4	67	49.6	2.66
Total by Sex of Victim	10,329	99.9	135	100.0	1.31
White Victims	7,187	70.5	120	92.3	1.67
Black Victims	3,014	29.5	10	7.7	0.33
Total either Black or White	10,201	100.0	130	100.0	1.27
White Male Victims	5,239	51.4	60	45.5	1.15
Black Male Victims	2,476	24.3	7	5.3	0.28
White Female Victims	1,948	19.1	60	45.5	3.08
Black Female Victims	537	5.3	5	3.8	0.93
Total White Black Male or Female	10,200	100.0	132	100.0	1.29
Offender-Victim Combinations					
White kills White	5,087	66.1	60	69.0	1.18
White kills Black	223	2.9	1	1.1	0.45
Black kills White	531	6.9	12	13.8	2.26
- (Of which, Black male kills White female)	141	1.8	9	10.3	6.38
Black kills Black	1,850	24.1	5	5.7	0.27
Total by Race of Offender and Victim	7,691	100.0	87	100.0	1.13

Source: Homicides data from FBI, covering the period of 1976 to 2019 (see Kaplan 2020). Death sentences: author. Note that some cases involve victims of more than one race. In such cases, “white victim” is defined as where any of the victims is white, and “black victim” means that there was at least one such victim, but no white victims.

Figure 1. Death Sentencing Rates by Race and Gender of Offender and Victim.



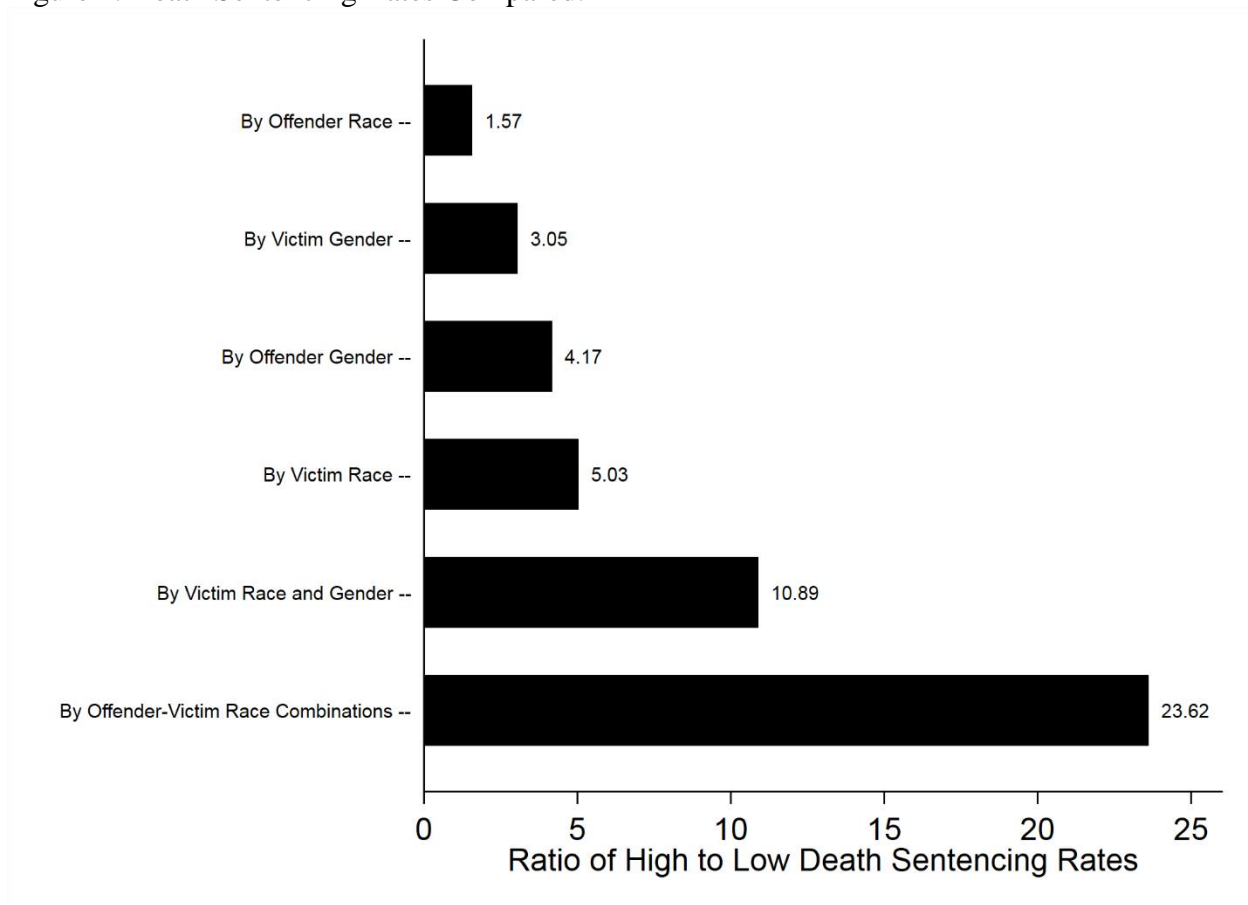
Source: See Table 1.

Figure 1 summarizes the main results apparent from Table 1, and the Table provides the precise numbers that produce these patterns. Looking at victims, those with male victims are much less likely to receive a sentence of death than those with female victims: 0.87 v. 2.66, which is a ratio of more than 3. Looking at the victims' race, those with white victims are more than 5 times as likely (1.67 percent) to be sentenced to death than those with black victims (0.33). These death-sentencing ratios reach a value of 11 when we compare those with white female victims (3.08 percent sentenced to death) to those with black male victims (0.28 percent). Note from Table 1 that black male victims represent 29.5 percent of all homicide victims in the state, but under 8 percent of the victims in cases leading to a death sentence. Looking at offenders shows that male offenders are more than 3 times as likely to see a death sentence as

female offenders, and that white offenders are 1.57 times as likely to see a death sentence compared to black offenders. While this racial difference may appear to be counter-intuitive, the reason for this is clear. Most white offenders have white victims, and such crimes have a higher rate of death sentencing (1.18) compared to those where black offenders have black victims (0.27 percent). The most powerful distinctions in death sentencing outcomes come when we look at the race of both the victim and the offender. The Table also shows the particular combination of white female victims and black male offenders. Looking at these combined victim-offender combinations shows that such crimes are more than 20 times as likely to lead to a death sentence compared to the more common instance of black offenders with black victims. Note that there were only 141 cases in the entire time frame when a black offender was alleged to have killed a white female, or 1.8 percent of all homicides. Nine of these cases lead to a death sentence, however, so they represented more than 10 percent of all death sentenced cases.

Figure 2 summarizes the differences just described. For each comparison laid out in Figure 1, it shows the ratio of the highest death-sentencing rate to the lowest.

Figure 2. Death Sentencing Rates Compared.



Source: Calculated from Figure 1. Ratios are calculated by dividing the highest value within a category by the lowest value in that same category.

Figure 2 allows a simple comparison of what comparisons generate the largest differences in rates of use of the death penalty. Note that all the values are substantially different from 1.00, which would be the ratio if there were no difference in rates of use across the various categories. For offender race, the ratio of 1.57 reflects the fact from Figure 1 that white offenders are 57 percent more likely to receive a death sentence than black offenders. This is the smallest difference observed. Victim gender shows a much greater disparity, offender gender is even greater than that, and so on. The ratios of 11 and 24 seen for victim race and gender, and offender-victim race combinations show that these distinctions are powerful determinants of death sentencing outcomes.

These remarkable statistics on different rates of death penalty usage depending on the characteristics of the offenders and victims are consistent with what has been found in national studies. These, however, compared homicide cases with cases leading to execution (see Baumgartner, Grigg, and Mastro 2015). As Kentucky has carried out just three executions, no statistical comparison will be attempted here. But all three executed individuals had a white female victim. The offenders themselves were all white males, but given the statistics laid out here, the fact that they had white female victims may be the more important driving factor. Most killers of white victims, including white female victims, are white males. In assessing the power of race in death sentencing outcomes, it is important to look simultaneously at the victims as well as the offenders and to keep in mind that the vast majority of homicides in Kentucky, as in other U.S. states, involve victims and offenders of the same race.

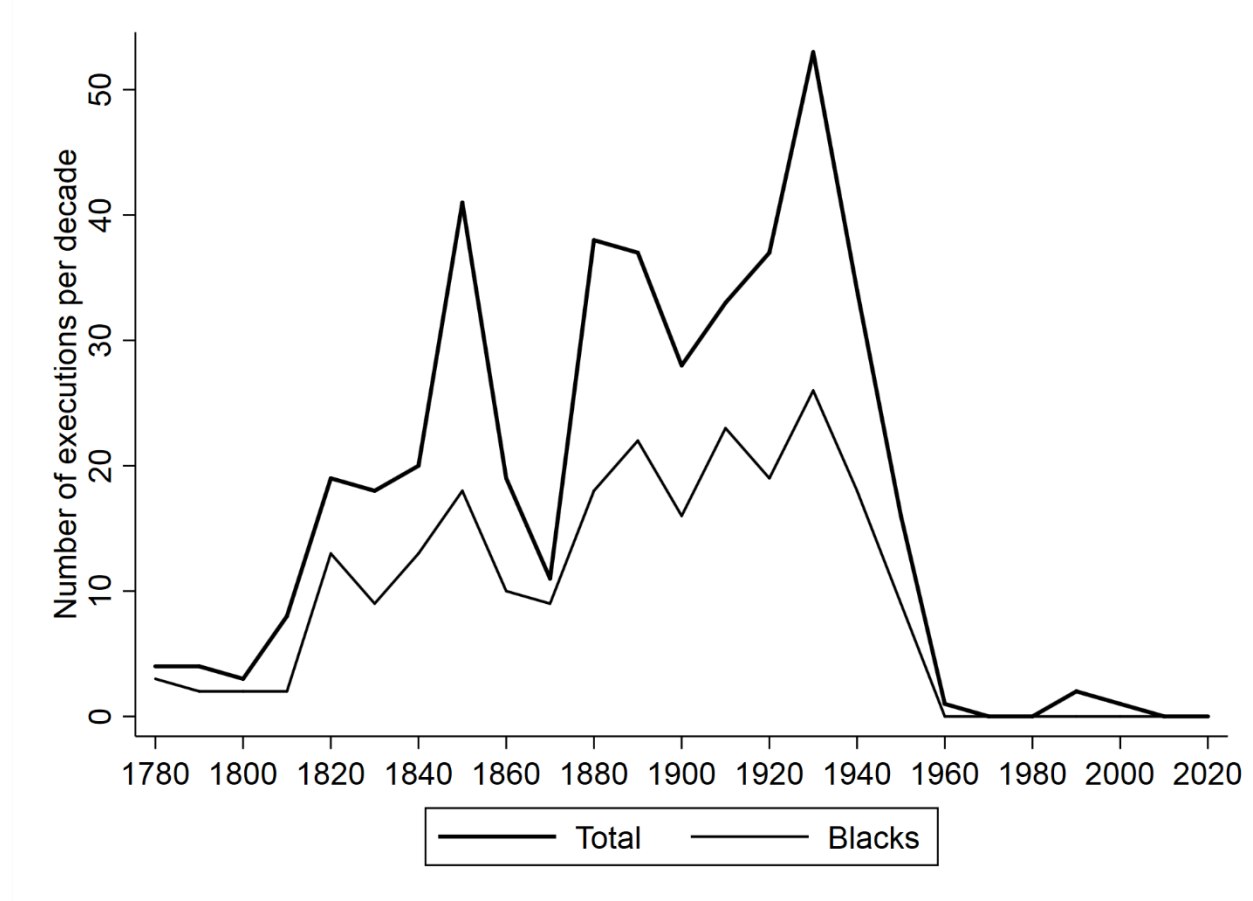
Race may be the most powerful driving factor in Kentucky's death penalty. But the racial disparities laid out here, extreme as they are, are not the only flaws in the system. It has a host of others: very low levels of use, little connection to homicide occurrence, geographic arbitrariness, high rates of error and reversal, and delays in carrying out death sentences leading to a graying population on death row. None of these characteristics speaks of a system that anyone would design nor choose to have. But we must assess the system as it really works, not as we wish it would be. The following sections lay out these additional problems beyond the racial inequities just described.

Declining usage over time

In parallel with the United States as a whole, judicial executions in Kentucky were more common in the distant past. Nation-wide, and in the state, the number of executions peaked in the 1930s. Figure 3 shows the number of judicial executions per decade, as well as the share of

those executed who were black. Historically, from 1780 through the 1960s, 424 individuals were executed, including 175 whites (41 percent) and 232 blacks (55 percent). A small number were of other races. In the modern era (e.g., since the *Furman* decision in 1972), however, just three individuals have been executed in Kentucky. Those three individuals were all white.

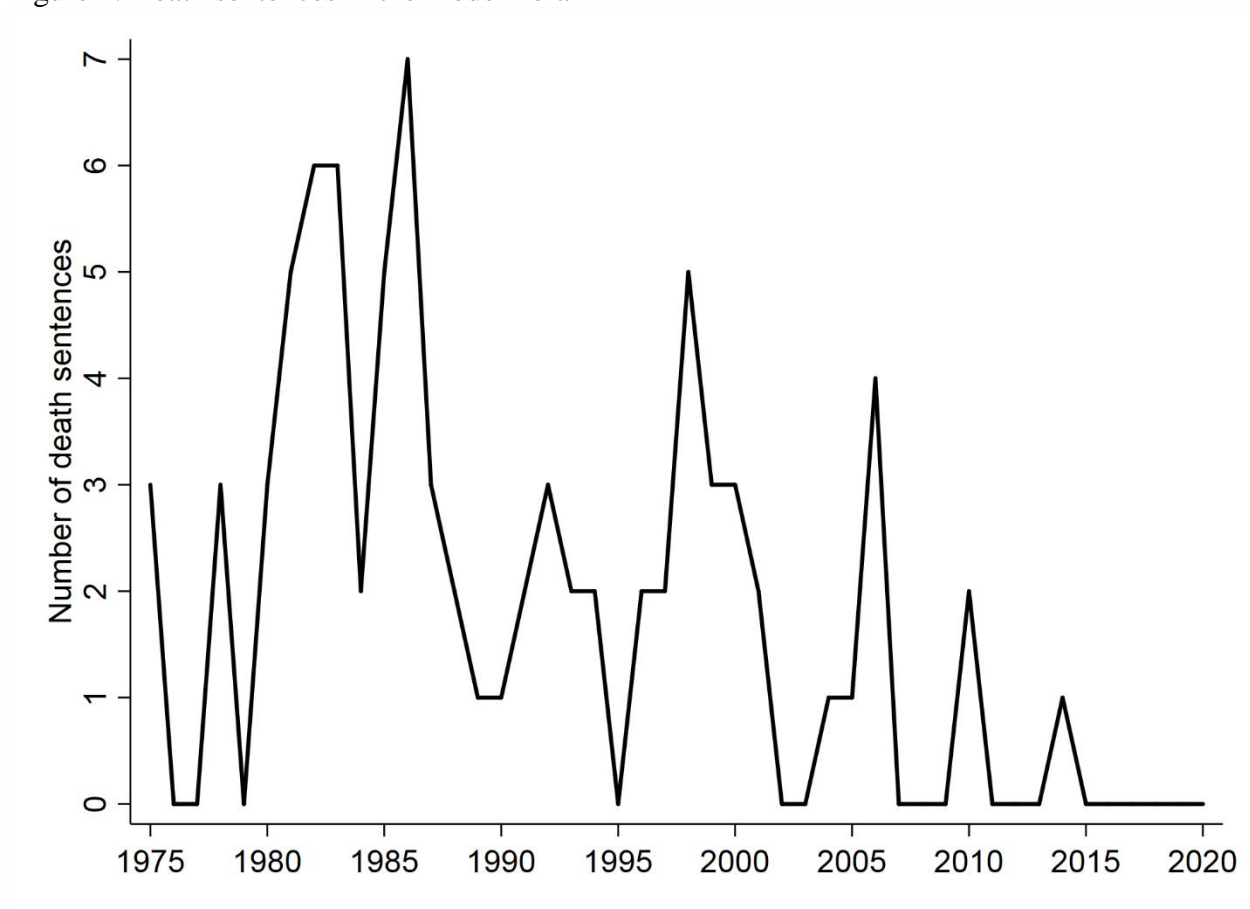
Figure 3. Judicial executions in Kentucky over time



Source: Pre-Furman cases from Espy and Smykla 2005; modern cases from author.

Since 1975, 82 individuals have been sentenced to death, an average of about two per year. Figure 4 shows these numbers, making clear their peak at seven death sentences in 1986 and a steady decline since then, particularly since 1998, when five individuals were condemned. The state has not issued a new death sentence in the past six years.

Figure 4. Death sentences in the modern era



Source: Author.

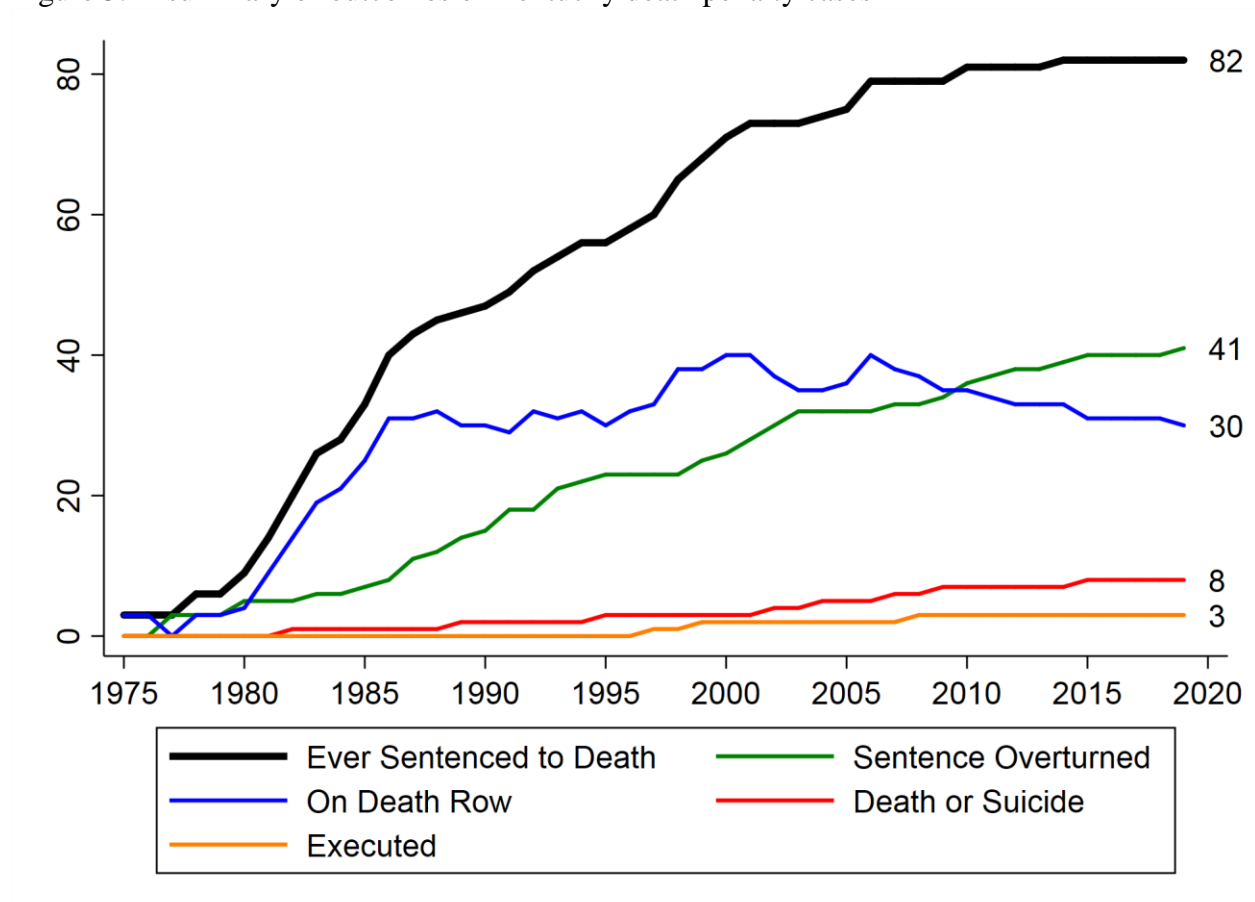
Few executions carried out since 1976

Kentucky has carried out three executions in the modern (post-*Furman*) era: Harold McQueen on July 1, 1997 for a 1980 crime in Madison County; Edward Lee Harper, on May 25, 1999 for a Jefferson County crime in 1982; and Marco Allen Chapman on November 21, 2008 for a 2002 crime in Boone County. All three were white men; all three had white female victims; two also had white male victims. Two were “volunteers” for execution, having dropped their appeals. Mr. McQueen was electrocuted and the other two were killed by lethal injection.

High rates of reversal

If there have been 82 death sentences but only three executions, it seems obvious that many cases must have other outcomes. As of 2021, 30 individuals remain under sentence of death. What happened to the others? Figure 5 shows the outcomes of all 82 cases, and how these patterns developed over time.

Figure 5. A summary of outcomes of Kentucky death penalty cases



Source: Author.

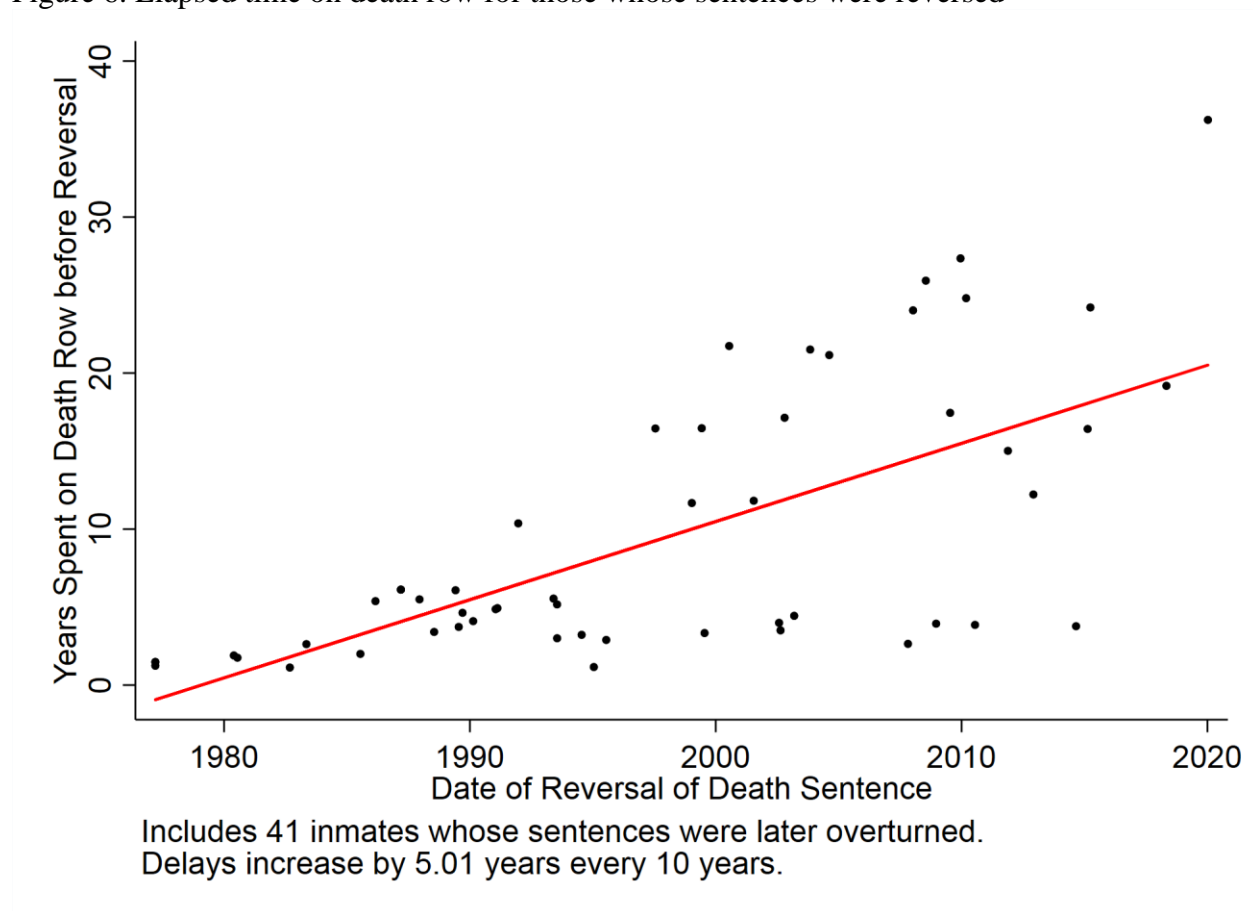
The thick black line defining the top of the curves in Figure 5 shows the cumulative number of individuals sentenced to death over time. It is the simple count of the annual totals from Figure 4. It climbed steeply in the early years, reflecting the higher numbers of death sentences being imposed during that period, reflected also in Figure 4. The blue line shows the size of the state's death row population. It rises in parallel with the total number of death

sentences in the early years, but then a number of sentence reversals begin to be apparent by the late 1980s (see the green line). The total population of death row remained relatively steady from approximately 1986, when it reached 31, to a peak of 41 in 2006, and to its current size, 30. Eight individuals have died, one a suicide, and the others from natural causes while under sentence of death. The single most common outcome of a death sentence, affecting exactly half of those ever sentenced to death, is to see a successful appeal of their death sentence and the imposition of a new sentence. In fact, individuals are nearly 14 times more likely to have their sentence reversed than carried out. One individual, Larry Osborne, was exonerated in 2002; he had been 17 years of age at the time of the crime for which he was sentenced to death based on the perjured testimony from a 15 year-old friend whose police interrogation tape had a mysterious 40-minute gap. His exoneration came in 2002 (see National Registry of Exonerations, 2021).

Many reversals come after decades on death row

The 41 individuals initially sentenced to death before seeing their sentences overturned served between 1.2 and 36 years on death row, with an average of 8 years. This time has increased steadily over time. One individual, Lief Halvorsen, was sentenced in 1983 as a 28 year old man and was removed from death row in December, 2019, at the age of 65, when Governor Matt Bevin commuted his sentence. Halvorsen had earned two college degrees and served as a mentor to younger inmates in his years under sentence of death (see WDRB 2020). Figure 6 shows the rapidly increasing times individuals have spent on death row before release. It shows, for each of the 41 individuals removed from death row, the number of years they spent on death row, by the date of their removal.

Figure 6. Elapsed time on death row for those whose sentences were reversed



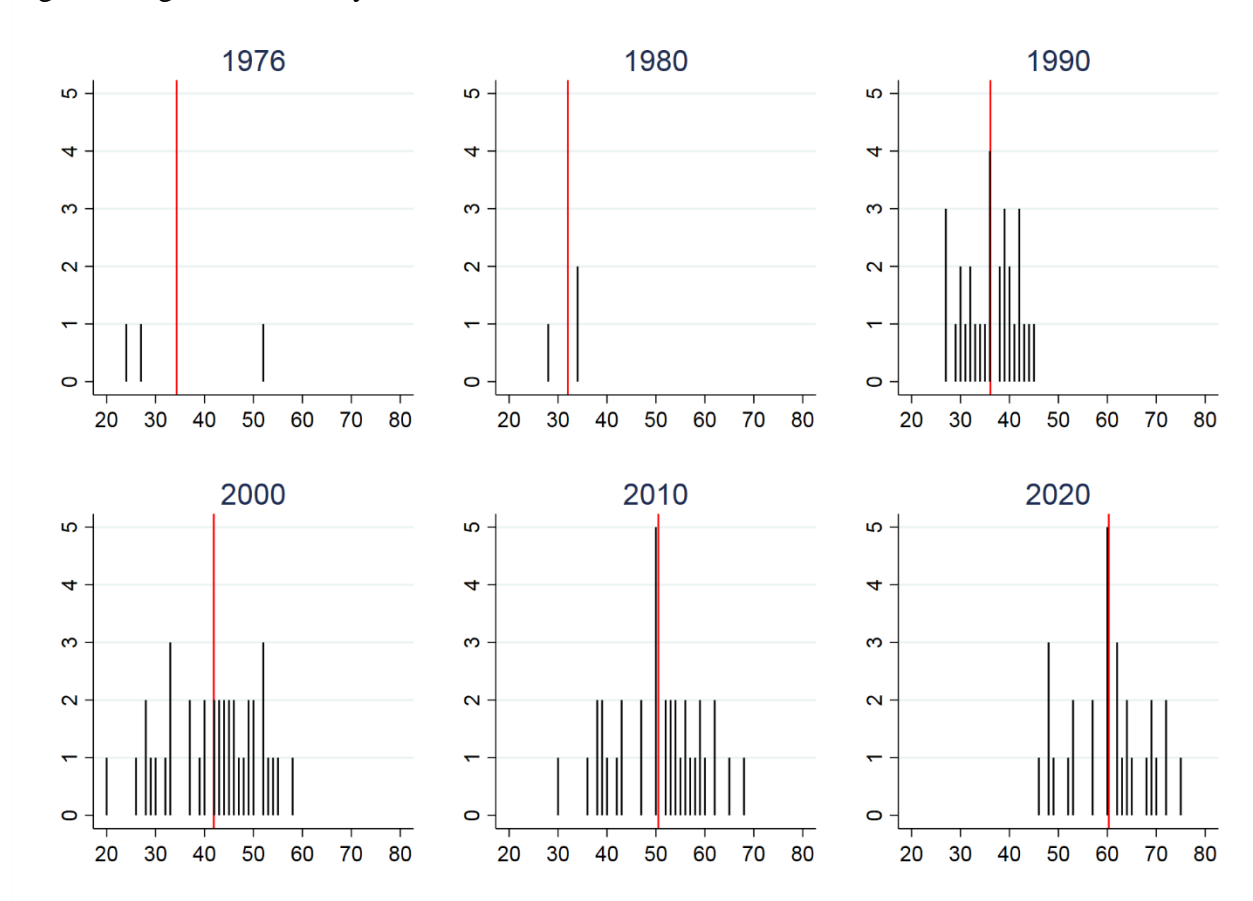
Many reversals come after only a few years, as can be seen by the row of observations toward the bottom of the graph. However, about half served for 10 years or longer under sentence of death before seeing their sentence eventually overturned: 20 served more than 10 years; 16 more than 15 years; nine more than 20 years; three more than 25 years; and one served 36 years.

A geriatric death row

Among those remaining on death row, they are an older and older group of individuals. Figures 4 and 5 made clear that few new individuals are being added to the state's death row population, so as the years go by, the age of those remaining has increased dramatically. Figure 7 shows the

ages of each individual on death row at six different time points: 1976, 1980, and then every ten years since then, through to 2020.

Figure 7. Ages of Kentucky death row inmates over time



Source: Author.

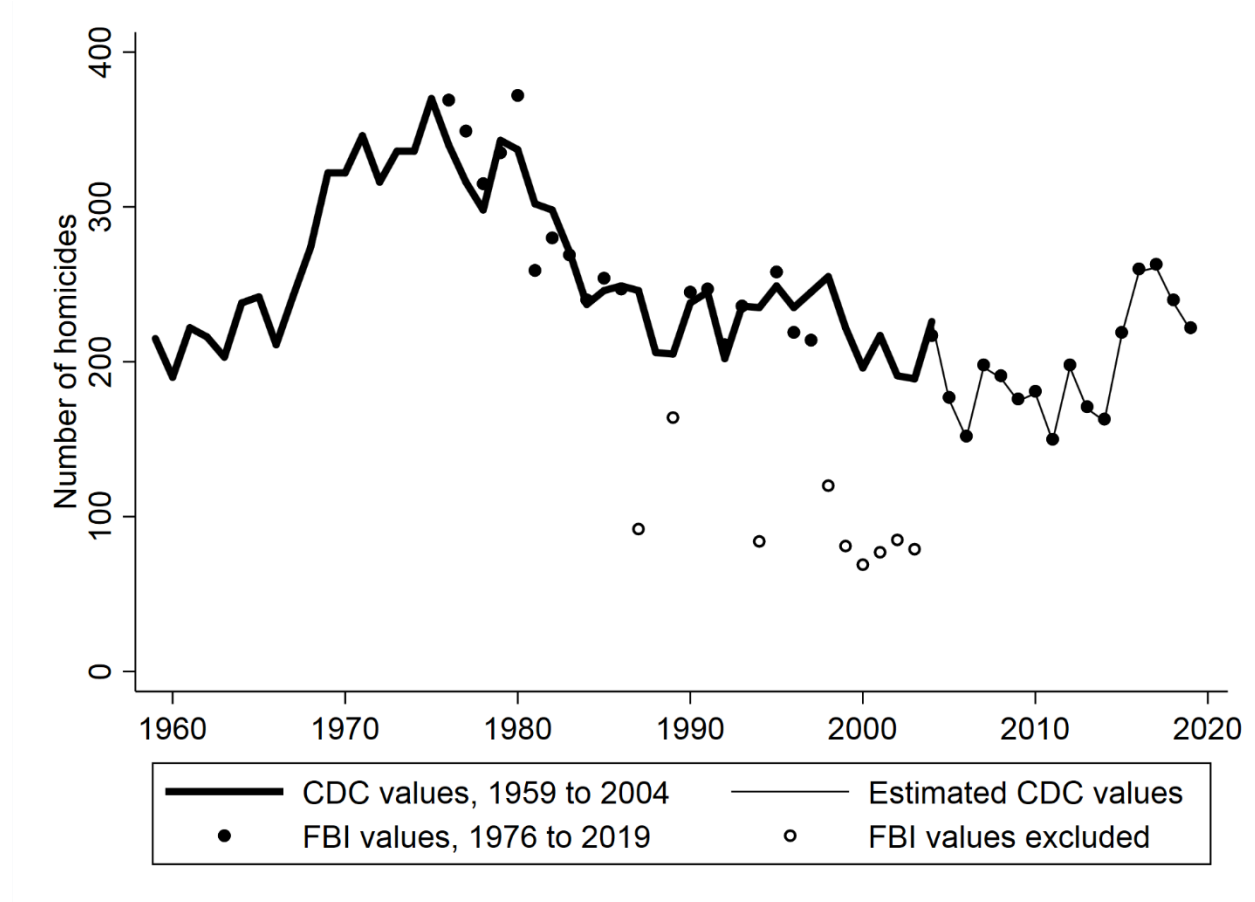
The average age of death row prisoners moved as follows in the figures, as indicated by the red vertical lines: 34.3, 32.0, 36.1, 41.9, 50.5, and 60.3. As of 2020, no individual on death row was under the age of 45, and five individuals, or one-sixth of the total, were in their seventies.

Little connection to homicide rates over time

There are two main ways to assess the numbers of homicides in a given year. The Centers for Disease Control records all deaths, including the cause of death, which includes different forms

of homicide (CDC, annual). The FBI reports homicide counts based on police records. I collected CDC data on homicide victims from 1959 through 2004, when the CDC stopped reporting them by state. I collected FBI data from 1976 through 2019 from a database compiled by Jacob Kaplan (2021). Figure 8 shows the CDC and the FBI numbers compared. Note that the FBI numbers were missing entirely for Kentucky for 1988 and were apparently under-reported in 1987, 1989, 1994, and 1998 to 2003. This is not uncommon for the FBI Supplemental Homicide Reports.

Figure 8. CDC and FBI homicide totals for Kentucky compared



During the years when the FBI and the CDC both reported what appear to be complete data, they are very similar. Differences can be accounted for by the fact that the CDC records the homicide according to the address of the decedent and the FBI does so by where the crime

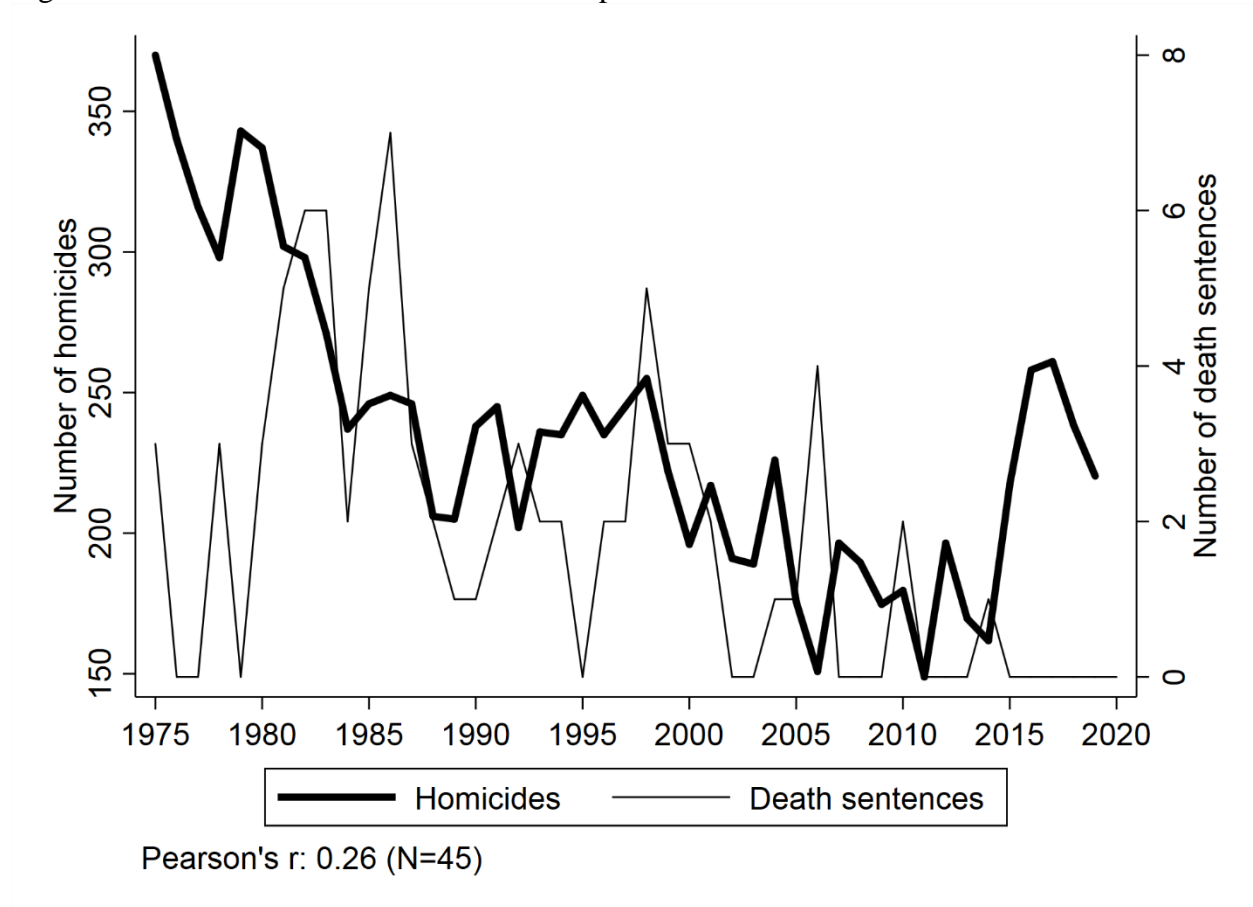
occurred. In any case, the solid line in the graph represents the best estimate of the number of homicides over time. It is the CDC number through 2004, then it is an estimate of that number based on the FBI reports². After 2004, none of the FBI reports appear to be anomalous, and the adjusted R^2 in a regression predicting the CDC number from the FBI number where both appear to be valid is 0.9936.

The CDC data can be broken down by the race of the victim, and these numbers are consistently in the range of approximately 25 percent black victims and 75 percent white victims. During the period from 1975 through 2004, the CDC reports a total of 7,645 homicides, of which 1,889 were black victims (24.7 percent), 5,733 were white (75.0 percent), with a very small share of other-race victims. These numbers are similar to the totals if we extend back to 1959, but that is before the period of interest, the modern death penalty period. The total number of estimated homicides in Kentucky from 1975 through 2020 is 10,584.

Figure 9 compares the number of homicides, from the figure above, with the number of death sentences imposed annually.

² The two numbers are virtually identical, so the estimated CDC number, based on the valid FBI data is given by this formula: CDC Homicide Victims = $0.9924395 * \text{FBI Homicide Victims}$.

Figure 9. Homicides and death sentences compared



Since 1975, the number of homicides in the state has varied from more than 350 down to as low as 150 in 2011. At the same time, the number of death sentences has varied from zero to a maximum of seven. The thin line shows the death sentences and the thick line shows the homicides. Homicides were declining sharply in the first 10 years of the modern death penalty system, while death sentences were increasing. Overall, it is clear that death sentences typically result from a very small share of homicides, and that there is little connection between the two. Across the 45 years presented in the figure, the correlation between the two numbers is just 0.26. The average number of homicides from 1975 through 2019 is 235, but the number of death sentences is 1.8, on average, from 1975 through 2020. Fewer than one percent of all homicides lead to a death sentence. And, since just three death sentences have been ultimately carried out, the share of homicides resulting in execution is vanishingly small: 0.028 percent.

Idiosyncratic geographic patterns unrelated to homicides

The 82 death sentences imposed in modern times have come from just a few counties out of Kentucky's 120 counties. Table 2 shows the number of death sentences imposed per county.

Table 2. Number of death sentences, 1972 to 2020, by county.

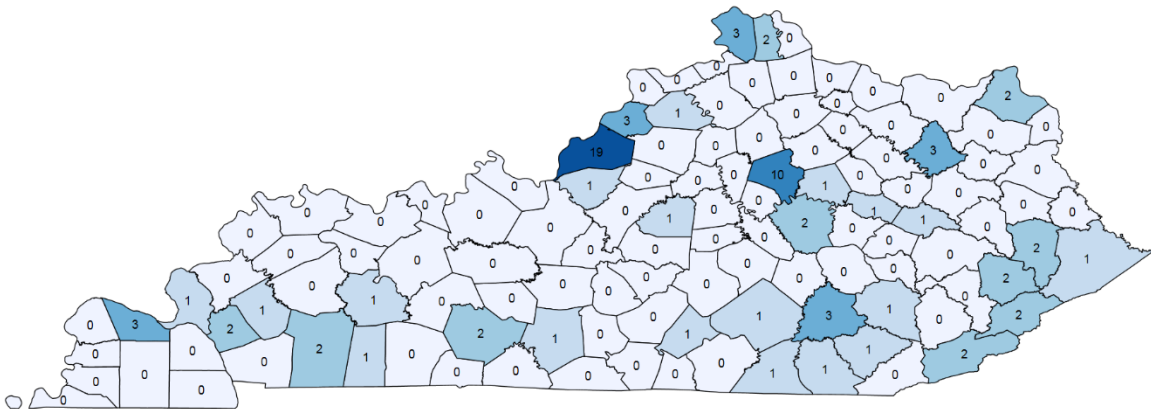
Number of Death Sentences Imposed	Number of Counties
None	85
One	18
Two	10
Three	5
Ten (Fayette)	1
Nineteen (Jefferson)	1
Total	120

Source: Author

Just as the previous section showed that a very small share of all homicides lead to a death sentence, so too are these death sentences concentrated in just a small number of jurisdictions. Eighty-five counties have issued not a single death sentence over the entire period since 1972, and all but two counties have issued fewer than four across this 48 year period. Only Fayette County, with 10 death sentences, and Jefferson, with 19, have imposed more than three. Figure 10 shows this geographic pattern. The vast number of counties are shaded in very light colors, representing zero, one, or two death sentences across the entire time period.

Figure 10. Death sentences since 1972.

Death Sentences



By contrast with Figure 10, Figure 11 shows the cumulative numbers of homicide offenders, according to the FBI supplemental homicide report numbers used above (see Kaplan 2021). Figure 12 then illustrates the combined rates; the number of death sentences in each county, per 100 homicides. Comparison of the three maps allows an assessment of whether the death sentences and homicides are closely connected. If they were strongly connected, the maps showing death sentences and homicides would be similar, and the map showing rates of death sentencing per 100 homicides should show equal rates across the state. What do we see?

Figure 11. Homicide offenders, 1976 to 2019.

Homicide offenders

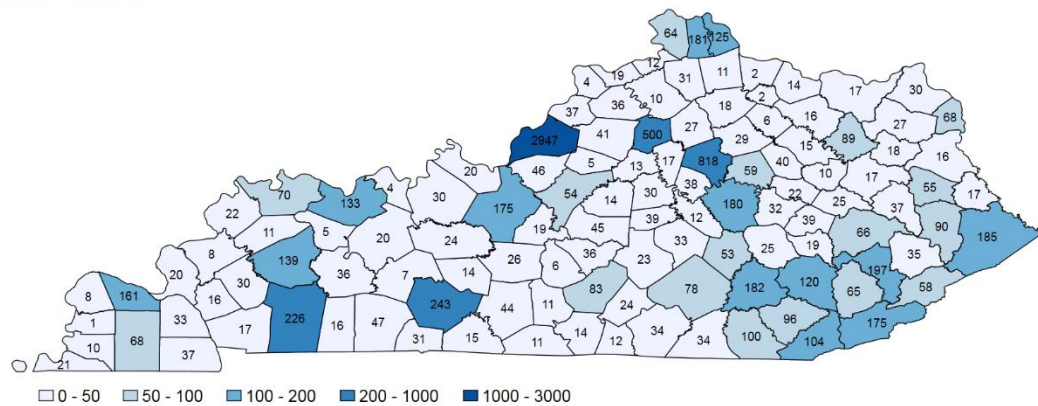


Figure 12. Death sentences per 100 homicide victims.

Death Sentences per 100 homicide victims

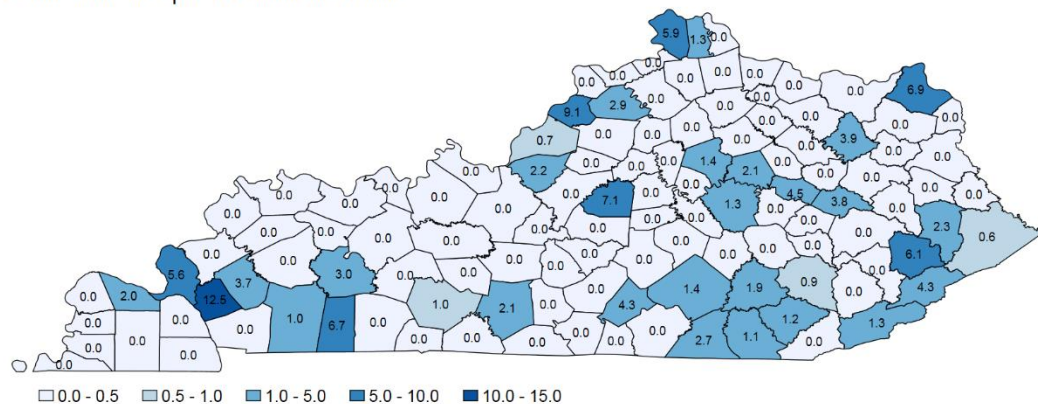


Figure 11 shows some rough similarity with Figure 10, with large numbers of homicides in the two counties, Fayette and Jefferson, with the highest use of the death penalty. But these are also the most populous counties in the state. However, Figure 10 also shows very low rates of

death penalty usage in many of the counties significant homicide numbers. This is apparent as well in Figure 12. The 82 counties with no death sentences of course are all shaded in the lightest color, but in this presentation it is clear that some counties with higher rates of death penalty usage are not those with the highest numbers of homicides.

Figure 13 illustrates this in greater detail. Because Fayette and Jefferson Counties are so different from the 118 other counties in terms of homicides and death sentences, the Figure is presented with and without these outlier counties.

Figure 13. Death sentences and homicides compared.

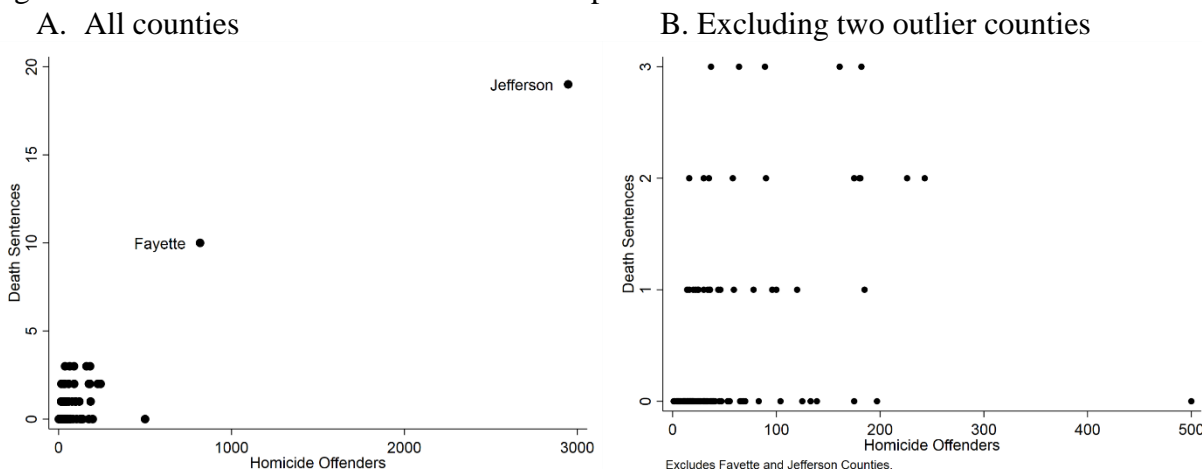
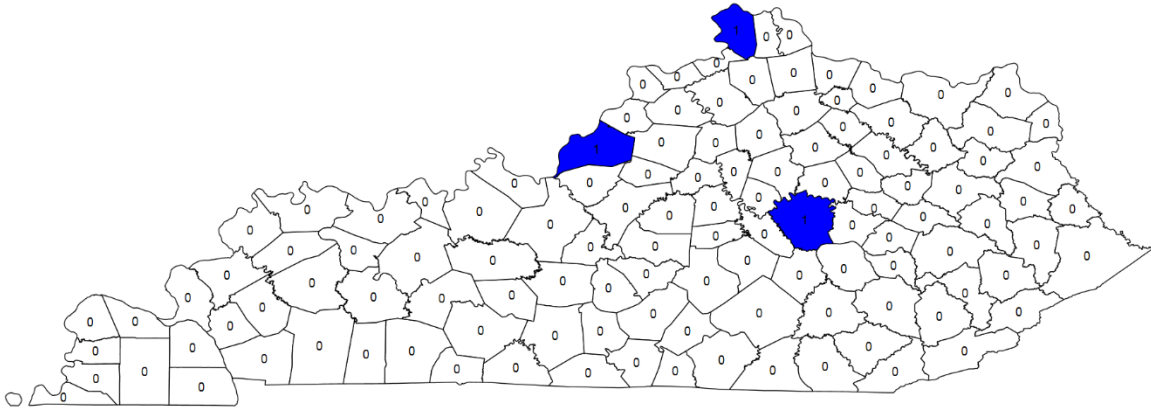


Figure 13 shows a cluster of counties, 118 of 120 in fact, that never or rarely use the death penalty. Part B of the figure focuses on these cases. Among those with no death sentences, the number of homicides ranges from very low to 500 homicides in Franklin County, which has more homicides than any of the other counties except for Fayette and Jefferson. Overall, the Figure makes clear that, aside from the two outlier counties, death sentences are not strongly associated with homicides across the counties of Kentucky. The correlation is just 0.36.

What about executions? Of course, there have been only three executions in the modern era. These stemmed from cases in Jefferson, Madison, and Boone Counties, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Executions.
Executions



The three counties shaded in blue in Figure 14 had 2,947, 180, and 64 cumulative homicide offenders across the modern period (compare Figure 14 with Figure 11). So it is impossible to make the statistical argument that judicial executions in the modern era have stemmed from those counties with the greatest number of homicides.

Just as we see increasingly isolated use of executions in the U.S. as a whole, judicial executions are more geographically isolated in Kentucky in the modern period as compared to previous periods. My colleagues and I found this was the case across the U.S. states by comparing the historical record with post-1976 events; executions are much more concentrated in just a few states in the modern period compared with the historical record (see Baumgartner et al. 2018, p. 338). The same is true across the counties of Kentucky. Figure 14 showed the modern data for executions, and Figure 10 for death sentences. Figures 15 and 16 show the historical record, first for the entire period from 1780 through 1972 and secondly for the period of 1900 through 1972.

Figure 15. Executions, 1780 to 1972.
Historical Executions (before 1972)

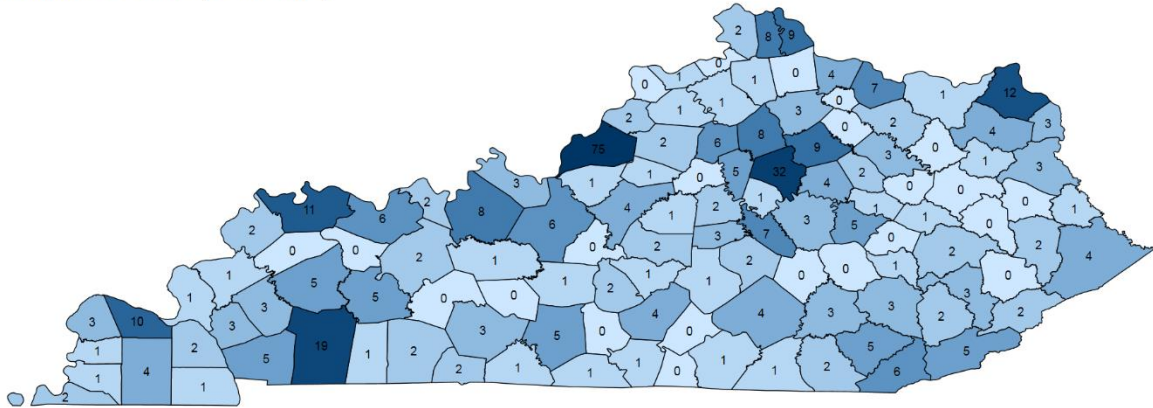
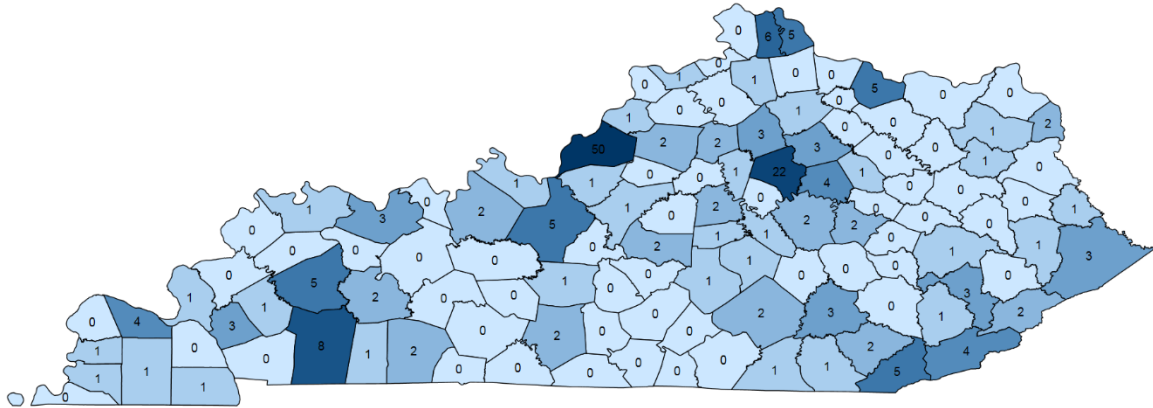


Figure 16. Executions, 1900 to 1972.
Historical Executions (1900 through 1972)



Note that all the data associated with this section of the report appear in the Appendix.

The historical use of the death penalty was much more widespread than in modern times. When the punishment is used so rarely as it has been since 1975, and comes from only three of the 120 counties of the state, we can indeed ask the question of whether it conforms with expectations about equal protection of the law. If 117 counties have not carried out even a single execution, and 85 have not handed down a single death sentence, what distinguishes them from those few counties that have followed a different path? Clearly, the answer is not that they have no homicides; they do. The extreme geographic concentration of the death penalty, combined with the declining use (shown in Figure 4, showing not a single death sentence state-wide since

2014), raises questions both of equal protection and evolving standards. At some point, the punishment must be considered to be “unusual” in the constitutional sense. Given that it has been applied in just 0.77 percent of all homicides, and carried out in just 0.03 percent, this conclusion would seem clear.

Conclusion

One can support or oppose the death penalty based on philosophical or religious precepts concerning forgiveness, the sanctity of life, or the need for retribution. One should not, however, assume that our criminal justice system works flawlessly. In carrying out the ultimate punishment, a state has a responsibility to do so with proportionality so that only those guilty of the most heinous crimes, and who are the most deserving, receive the ultimate punishment. While this overview of the historical record has been incomplete as it has not looked at the aggravating factors associated with all 10,000+ homicides in the state since 1976, it has, nonetheless, shown enough information to challenge any assumption that the state’s death penalty system is coherent, reliable, proportionate, racially neutral in its application, or reasonable by any measure. On the contrary, it exhibits extreme racial disparities, with killers of white victims vastly more likely to receive a death sentence than those with victims of other races; it is rarely used; it is geographically arbitrary; it has little relation with homicides either across time or across space; it most commonly leads to decades on death row before the sentence is later overturned on appeal; and it is falling out of use since no sentences have been handed down since 2014, even though over 1,000 homicides have occurred in that period. It begs the question, what is the point of retaining a costly system that is racially biased, rarely used, and so capriciously applied?

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Appendix

Table A1. List of 82 death sentences in Kentucky since 1975.

Last Name	First Names	County	Outcome	Sex	Race	Date of Death Sentence
Self	Jimmy Keith	McCracken	4	M	W	9/15/1975*
Meadows	Ronnie	McCracken	4	M	W	9/19/1975
Boyd	Wallace Oscar	Greenup	4	M	W	12/12/1975
Hudson	Joe Eddie	Jefferson	4	M	B	6/20/1978
Smith	Johnny Marshall	Muhlenberg	5	M	W	9/29/1978
Gall Jr.	Eugene William	Boone	4	M	W	10/6/1978
White	Karu Gene	Powell	10	M	W	3/29/1980
O'Bryan	La Verne	Jefferson	5	F	W	9/12/1980
Ice	Todd	Wolfe	5	M	W	10/9/1980
McQueen	Harold	Madison	1	M	W	1/17/1981
James	Larry T	Oldham	4	M	W	1/20/1981
Holland	Jack Joe	Oldham	4	M	W	1/20/1981
Bowling	Alexander	Rowan	2	M	W	7/1/1981*
Kordenbrock	Paul	Boone	4	M	W	7/10/1981
Stanford	Kevin N.	Jefferson	7	M	B	4/6/1982
McClellan	Raymond T	Jefferson	4	M	W	5/18/1982
Skaggs	David Leroy	Barren	3	M	W	7/13/1982
Marlowe	Hugh	Harlan	5	M	W	7/29/1982
Matthews	David Eugene	Jefferson	10	M	W	11/11/1982
Harper Jr.	Edward Lee	Jefferson	1	M	W	12/6/1982
Bevins	William Okie (Oakie)	Greenup	3	M	W	4/21/1983
Smith	David "Little Britches"	Pike	3	M	W	6/1/1983
Ward	Douglas	Clay	8	M	W	7/1/1983*
Halvorsen	Leif C.	Fayette	7	M	W	9/15/1983
Willoughby	Mitchell L.	Fayette	10	M	W	9/15/1983
Leonard	Jeffrey	Jefferson	7	M	B	12/2/1983
Sanborn	Parramore Lee	Henry	10	M	W	3/16/1984
Moore	Brian Keith	Jefferson	10	M	W	11/29/1984
Askew	Robert Lee	Jefferson	5	M	B	1/4/1985
Grooms	Fred	Lyon	4	M	B	2/2/1985
Simmons	Beoria A.	Jefferson	4	M	B	5/14/1985
Tamme	Eugene Frank	Washington	3	M	W	8/8/1985
Dean	Roy Wayne	Todd	4	M	W	10/7/1985
Morris	Joseph Edward	Harlan	5	M	W	1/10/1986
Walls	Christopher Charles	Jefferson	4	M	W	3/7/1986

Cosby	Teddy Lee	Jefferson	4	M	B	3/7/1986
Taylor	Victor Dewayne	Fayette	10	M	B	5/23/1986
Epperson	Roger Dale	Letcher	10	M	W	6/20/1986
Hodge	Benny Lee	Letcher	10	M	W	6/20/1986
Thompson	Eugene William	Lyon	10	M	W	10/15/1986
Foster	LaFonda Faye	Fayette	4	F	W	5/11/1987
Sanders	David Lee	Madison	10	M	W	6/5/1987
Clark	Michael Dean	Fayette	4	M	W	10/29/1987
Thomas	Alfred Grayson	Knott	4	M	W	4/29/1988
Wilson	Gregory	Kenton	10	M	B	10/31/1988
Jacobs	Clawvern	Knott	4	M	W	9/6/1989
Smith	Robert Allen	McCracken	4	M	W	7/1/1990*
Bowling	Thomas Clyde	Fayette	3	M	W	1/4/1991
Hunter	James D.	Clark	4	M	W	4/11/1991
Bussell	Charles Wayne	Christian	4	M	B	1/17/1992
Perdue	Tommie	Russell	4	M	W	8/7/1992
Bowling	Ronnie L.	Laurel	10	M	W	12/9/1992
Foley	Robert Carl	Laurel	10	M	W	9/23/1993
Cushman	Allen	Laurel	3	M	W	11/19/1993
Baze	Ralph Stephen	Rowan	10	M	W	2/4/1994
Haight	Randy Winton	Jefferson	10	M	W	3/22/1994
Rogers	Ernest Arnaze	Christian	8	M	B	2/28/1996
Mills	John	Knox	4	M	W	10/18/1996
Fields	Samuel Stevens	Rowan	10	M	W	4/29/1997
Johnson	Donald Herb	Floyd	10	M	W	10/1/1997
	Vincent					
Stopher	Christian	Jefferson	10	M	W	3/23/1998
Young	Gerald	Fayette	4	M	B	7/15/1998
Woodall	Robert Keith	Caldwell	10	M	W	9/4/1998
St. Clair	Michael D.	Bullitt	4	M	W	9/14/1998
McKinney	Gary Casper	Pulaski	4	M	W	9/24/1998
Osborne	Larry	Whitley	6	M	W	1/27/1999
Garland	John Roscoe	McCreary	3	M	W	2/15/1999
Furnish	Fred	Kenton	10	M	W	7/8/1999
Caudill	Virginia Susan	Fayette	10	F	W	3/24/2000
	Johnathon					
Goforth	Wayne	Fayette	10	M	W	3/24/2000
Soto	Miguel	Oldham	4	M	H	8/17/2000
Parrish	Melvin Lee	Jefferson	10	M	B	2/1/2001
Wheeler	Roger Lamont	Jefferson	10	M	B	4/27/2001
Chapman	Marco Allen	Boone	1	M	W	12/14/2004
Noble	Sherman Louis	Jefferson	3	M	B	2/7/2005
Hunt	James	Floyd	10	M	W	7/28/2006

Brown	Phillip L.	Warren	4	M	B	8/21/2006
Meece	William	Warren	10	M	W	11/9/2006
Windsor	Shawn	Jefferson	10	M	W	11/17/2006
Dunlap	Kevin	Livingston	10	M	W	3/19/2010
Ordway	Carlos Lamont	Fayette	4	M	B	10/29/2010
White	Larry Lamont	Jefferson	10	M	B	10/14/2014

Notes: * indicates that the date of the death sentence is an approximation, not an exact date.
Values for Outcomes are as follows: 1 = executed, 2 = suicide, 3 = natural death, 4 = resented: Life, 5 = resented: less than life, 6 = exonerated, 7 = commuted, 8 = removed, unspecified reason, 9 = new trial ordered, removed from death row, outcome of new trial unknown, 10 = on death row.

Table A2. Yearly numbers of homicides, executions, and death sentences, 1972–2020.

Year	Homicides	Executions	Sentences
1972	158	0	0
1973	336	0	0
1974	336	0	0
1975	370	0	3
1976	340	0	0
1977	316	0	0
1978	298	0	3
1979	343	0	0
1980	337	0	3
1981	302	0	5
1982	298	0	6
1983	271	0	6
1984	237	0	2
1985	246	0	5
1986	249	0	7
1987	246	0	3
1988	206	0	2
1989	205	0	1
1990	238	0	1
1991	245	0	2
1992	202	0	3
1993	236	0	2
1994	235	0	2
1995	249	0	0
1996	235	0	2
1997	245	1	2
1998	255	0	5
1999	222	1	3
2000	196	0	3
2001	217	0	2
2002	191	0	0
2003	189	0	0
2004	226	0	1
2005	176	0	1
2006	151	0	4
2007	197	0	0
2008	190	1	0
2009	175	0	0
2010	180	0	2
2011	149	0	0
2012	197	0	0

2013	170	0	0
2014	162	0	1
2015	217	0	0
2016	258	0	0
2017	261	0	0
2018	238	0	0
2019	220	0	0
2020		0	0

Homicide numbers are based on CDC values, estimated using FBI numbers after 2004. See Figure 8 in the text for explanation.

Table A3. Executions, Death Sentences, and Homicides by County.

County	Executions before 1972	Executions, 1900 to 1972	Death Sentences	Executions	Homicide Incidents	Homicide Victims	Homicide Offenders	Death Sentences per 100 Homicide Victims
Jefferson	75	50	19	1	2,576	2,696	2,947	0.70
Fayette	32	22	10	0	693	712	818	1.40
Franklin	6	2	0	0	412	438	500	-
Warren	3	0	2	0	196	207	243	0.97
Christian	19	8	2	0	190	199	226	1.01
Perry	3	3	0	0	163	180	197	-
Pike	4	3	1	0	166	181	185	0.55
Laurel	3	3	3	0	146	158	182	1.90
Kenton	8	6	2	0	151	160	181	1.25
Madison	3	2	2	1	147	160	180	1.25
Harlan	5	4	2	0	150	153	175	1.31
Hardin	6	5	0	0	152	160	175	-
McCracken	10	4	3	0	141	152	161	1.97
Hopkins	5	5	0	0	111	118	139	-
Daviess	6	3	0	0	103	108	133	-
Campbell	9	5	0	0	110	116	125	-
Clay	3	0	1	0	101	109	120	0.92
Bell	6	5	0	0	90	94	104	-
Whitley	2	1	1	0	82	91	100	1.10
Knox	5	2	1	0	80	83	96	1.20
Floyd	2	1	2	0	81	87	90	2.30
Rowan	0	0	3	0	70	76	89	3.95
Adair	4	0	0	0	71	78	83	-
Pulaski	4	2	1	0	67	69	78	1.45
Henderson	11	1	0	0	61	69	70	-

Boyd	3	2	0	0	60	66	68	-
Graves	4	1	0	0	56	64	68	-
Breathitt	2	1	0	0	63	65	66	-
Leslie	2	1	0	0	61	62	65	-
Boone	2	0	3	1	47	51	64	5.88
Clark	4	4	1	0	46	48	59	2.08
Letcher	2	2	2	0	44	47	58	4.26
Johnson	0	0	0	0	52	53	55	-
Nelson	4	1	0	0	51	55	54	-
Rockcastle	0	0	0	0	46	47	53	-
Logan	2	2	0	0	41	41	47	-
Bullitt	1	1	1	0	41	46	46	2.17
Marion	2	2	0	0	40	41	45	-
Barren	5	2	1	0	43	48	44	2.08
Shelby	2	2	0	0	37	37	41	-
Montgomery	2	1	0	0	36	36	40	-
Boyle	3	1	0	0	28	32	39	-
Lee	0	0	0	0	32	34	39	-
Jessamine	1	0	0	0	36	36	38	-
Calloway	1	1	0	0	32	33	37	-
Oldham	2	1	3	0	33	33	37	9.09
Magoffin	0	0	0	0	34	34	37	-
Muhlenberg	5	2	1	0	32	33	36	3.03
Taylor	1	0	0	0	35	35	36	-
Henry	1	0	1	0	34	34	36	2.94
Knott	0	0	2	0	32	33	35	6.06
McCreary	1	1	1	0	33	37	34	2.70
Wayne	1	0	0	0	31	35	34	-
Lincoln	2	1	0	0	27	27	33	-
Marshall	2	0	0	0	32	37	33	-
Estill	5	2	0	0	26	27	32	-

Grant	1	1	0	0	24	25	31	-
Simpson	2	0	0	0	28	29	31	-
Caldwell	3	1	1	0	27	27	30	3.70
Breckinridge	8	2	0	0	29	29	30	-
Mercer	2	2	0	0	28	29	30	-
Greenup	12	0	2	0	28	29	30	6.90
Bourbon	9	3	0	0	29	29	29	-
Carter	4	1	0	0	22	23	27	-
Scott	8	3	0	0	25	28	27	-
Hart	1	1	0	0	26	26	26	-
Jackson	0	0	0	0	22	23	25	-
Wolfe	1	0	1	0	25	26	25	3.85
Russell	0	0	1	0	23	23	24	4.35
Grayson	1	0	0	0	22	23	24	-
Casey	1	1	0	0	19	20	23	-
Union	2	0	0	0	16	17	22	-
Powell	1	0	1	0	21	22	22	4.55
Fulton	2	0	0	0	20	21	21	-
Ohio	2	0	0	0	19	22	20	-
Livingston	1	1	1	0	18	18	20	5.56
Meade	3	1	0	0	15	18	20	-
Larue	0	0	0	0	16	16	19	-
Carroll	1	1	0	0	18	20	19	-
Owsley	1	0	0	0	19	19	19	-
Elliott	1	1	0	0	18	18	18	-
Harrison	3	1	0	0	18	18	18	-
Martin	1	1	0	0	15	16	17	-
Woodford	5	1	0	0	17	19	17	-
Morgan	0	0	0	0	15	15	17	-
Lewis	1	0	0	0	13	13	17	-
Trigg	5	0	0	0	16	16	17	-

Lawrence	3	0	0	0	14	14	16	-
Lyon	3	3	2	0	16	16	16	12.50
Fleming	2	0	0	0	11	12	16	-
Todd	1	1	1	0	15	15	16	6.67
Bath	3	0	0	0	14	14	15	-
Allen	1	0	0	0	15	15	15	-
Mason	7	5	0	0	12	12	14	-
Cumberland	1	0	0	0	11	12	14	-
Washington	1	0	1	0	13	14	14	7.14
Edmonson	0	0	0	0	11	12	14	-
Anderson	0	0	0	0	13	13	13	-
Garrard	7	1	0	0	12	13	12	-
Gallatin	0	0	0	0	10	10	12	-
Clinton	0	0	0	0	11	11	12	-
Metcalfe	0	0	0	0	10	10	11	-
Pendleton	0	0	0	0	11	11	11	-
Webster	0	0	0	0	10	11	11	-
Monroe	1	0	0	0	11	12	11	-
Hickman	1	1	0	0	9	9	10	-
Meniffee	0	0	0	0	9	9	10	-
Owen	1	0	0	0	10	10	10	-
Ballard	3	0	0	0	8	8	8	-
Crittenden	1	0	0	0	6	6	8	-
Butler	0	0	0	0	7	7	7	-
Nicholas	0	0	0	0	6	6	6	-
Green	2	0	0	0	6	7	6	-
Spencer	1	0	0	0	5	5	5	-
McLean	0	0	0	0	5	5	5	-
Hancock	2	0	0	0	4	4	4	-
Trimble	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	-
Bracken	4	0	0	0	2	2	2	-

Robertson	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	-
Carlisle	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	-

Notes: Death Sentences and Executions numbers refer to the period of 1972 to 2020. Homicides numbers refer to the period from 1976 to 2019 (using FBI data). Historical Executions data from Espy and Smykla (2005).