

**The North Carolina Database of US Executions**  
**Frank R. Baumgartner**  
**Department of Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**  
**Frankb@unc.edu**

**Variable Descriptions and Codebook**  
**Version 1, July 1, 2011**  
**Frank Baumgartner and BJ Dworak**

The North Carolina Database of US Executions since 1976 consists of information relating to all judicial executions in the US since the re-establishment of capital punishment in 1976. This codebook provides an overview of the data sources and then an explanation of each variable included. The database itself is available as a spreadsheet with one row for each execution and column variables with the names indicated below. The database is made available freely. Citations should be made using the citation format below:

Baumgartner, Frank R. 2011. The North Carolina Database of US Executions. Electronic database and codebook. Retrieved from: <http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/Innocence/executions.htm> retrieved on [date].

The dataset was initially constructed by combining the Death Penalty Information Center's (DPIC) database (<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/executions>) and the ESPY file (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/>), with supplemental information added as described below. All information contained in the DPIC list has been maintained, including date of execution, inmate name, age at execution, gender and race of the inmate, the state, region, count and race of victims, method of execution, and other notes such as if the offender was a juvenile, a volunteer, or if there was evidence of mental retardation. On occasion, there were discrepancies between the DPIC and ESPY sources. Generally the DPIC source was preferred, though other sources were consulted as available (see below). The information is as accurate as we have been able to generate though we cannot guarantee perfection. Please report any apparent discrepancies to Frank Baumgartner at [Frankb@unc.edu](mailto:Frankb@unc.edu) with an explanation or a source for the revised information and he will attempt to maintain the database with the greatest possible accuracy.

We added additional information to that previously available through DPIC, including more detailed information on the race and gender of the victims, the county of conviction, the date of the crime and the date of the death sentence.

***Race and Gender of Victims***

We provide specific numbers for victims of different racial and gender characteristics, allowing summaries to be made for any combination of inmate and victim characteristics. In some cases,

different information sources provided conflicting information on the victims. This is due to the fact that inmates with multiple victims or multiple murder trials may have received the death penalty only for some of the victims, not others. Certain information sources, however, may report the total number of victims. We report information concerning only the victims for whom the inmate received the sentence of death. When it was not possible to distinguish between different numbers of victims reported in different sources, we have reported the information most commonly reported across all sources.

To find the race and gender of each victim, we started with the information made available in the DPIC list, supplemented by the ESPY file where available. To fill in greater detail, we followed these steps.

First, we used the Clark County, Indiana prosecutor's website, which provides a wealth of information on executions since 1976 and particularly those in the last 10 years (<http://www.clarkprosecutor.org/html/death/usexecute.htm>).

Second, if information was still missing (especially for cases before 1990), we used state Department of Corrections or Department of Justice websites for information on executed offenders. For a complete list of these sites and other helpful resources, DPIC has this list of links: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/death-penalty-related-web-sites>. Depending on the state, more or less information was available. For example, in Texas, a detailed account of the crime and victims is provided for all executed offenders, while in Virginia, no information is provided regarding executed offenders in the state.

Third, for crimes where the race and gender were not available on the Clark County site or specific state websites, we performed Lexis-Nexis searches of US Newspapers and Wires. The general search approach was a Boolean search consisting of [inmate name] AND [state] AND execution. Occasionally, variations on names, e.g. with or without middle initial, only last name, etc. were required.

Since we almost always started with the number and race of victims, sometimes it was necessary to infer gender based on pronouns in articles describing the crime, e.g. he, she, his, her, or based on names. For example, we could safely assume that an individual with the name Elizabeth was a female. In select instances, full web searches were performed using Google. Some states had more resources available on the web than others.

In situations where the data for any variable was not available from one of the aforementioned, consolidated resources, a URL or other source is listed in the database. This is true for all dates of crime and conviction.

***County of Conviction***

A similar approach was taken to finding the county of conviction and US Census Bureau FIPS code. Often, this data was available on the Clark County site or on individual state site. On Clark County, this data is found by clicking on any offender and seeing a details page. It was either available in the basic information near the top of the page or could be found in one of the provided newspaper clippings. Lexis-Nexis searches were also helpful with modified search terms to include the word county. After finding the name of the county, we compared it with a list of all FIPS codes for the United States and entered this number into the database.

***Date of Crime and Date of Death Sentence***

The last variables researched were the date of crime and date of first death sentence. These variables were of interest to analyze the “wait time” between crime, sentencing, and eventual execution. Again, for the last ten years, we were able to retrieve this information from Clark County. For all other cases, a hybrid of Lexis-Nexis news searches and Google searches were performed. In some cases, both pieces of information were available from the same resource. In others, two separate sources were used. Court records were also useful in this task.

Generally (that is, in about 98% of the cases) we had a firm date for the crime. Occasionally we found vaguer references such as “last summer” or “earlier this year.” In these cases we entered a precise date representing the mid-point of the period referred to. (So for example if a newspaper story printed on October 1 reports that a crime occurred “earlier this year” we would enter the mid-point of the period from January 1 to October 1, which would be May 1.) In all cases where we used an estimated rather than a firm date, we indicate this in the variables named “Estimated Date of Crime” or “Estimated Date of Death Sentence.” These are coded 0 for a firm date and 1 for an estimated date. Note that a small number of cases are missing for Date of Crime or Date of Sentence, where we could not find the information or even an estimate of it. These are left blank in the database.

Note that our Date of Death Sentence refers to the date of the first death sentence the inmate received. Most inmates sentenced to death appeal and most appeals lead to a new trial of guilt or for the penalty phase. Many of those who are eventually executed have their initial sentence overturned, only to be re-sentenced to death a second or a third time. We indicate the date of the first sentence, not any later ones.

**List of variables with descriptions:**

**date:** Date of execution.

**name:** Name of inmate.

**age:** Age in years of inmate at date of execution.

**sex:** Gender of inmate (1=male; 2=female)

**state:** Two-letter Postal Service abbreviation for state of jurisdiction. (FE=Federal execution)

**fips:** Five-digit Census FIPS code for state and county of crime. See Census.gov for a list of fips codes. (0=Federal execution)

**region:** DPIC report for the region of execution, based on state codes. S=South, M=Midwest, N=Northeast, W=West

**race:** Race of inmate. 1=White, 2=Black, 3=Hispanic, 4=Native American, 5=Asian American

**numberandraceofvictims:** From DPIC, alphanumeric variable that includes the number and race of the victims as a text field.

**numbervictims:** Numeric field listing the total number of victims. Note from the description above that information here refers only to the victims for whose death the inmate received the death sentence.

**whitevictims:** Number of white victims.

**blackvictims:** Number of black victims.

**otherracevictims:** Number of victims of other races.

**whmalevictims:** Number of white male victims.

**blmalevictims:** Number of black male victims.

**othmalevictims:** Number of male victims of other races.

**whfemalevictims:** Number of white female victims.

**blfemalevictims:** Number of black female victims.

**othfemalevictims:** Number of female victims of other races.

**method:** Method of execution. A text field describing whether the execution was by lethal injection, execution, firing squad, gas chamber.

**other:** The DPIC website includes this information for selected cases generally noting where the inmate is a juvenile, a case where there was evidence of mental handicap, or was a "volunteer." A volunteer is an inmate who has instructed their lawyers to stop all appeals.

**inmate\_white:** A dummy variable coded 1 for white inmates, 0 for all others.

**inmate\_black:** A dummy variable coded 1 for black inmates, 0 for all others.

**inmate\_otherrace:** A dummy variable coded 1 for inmates of races other than black or white, 0 for blacks and whites.

**source:** The search term used to find the article, from the URL reported in the next variable, sourceURL. Where the information concerning victims came from a hard-to-find source such as a Lexis-Nexis search for a court record or a newspaper story, we provide here the name of the story. If blank the source is in the sourceURL variable.

**sourceURL:** The base URL for cases found in the previous variable, source. If blank, the source was the Clark County Prosecutor or else a state Department of Corrections or a state Department of Justice web site.

**date-of-crime:** Date of the crime.

**source-date-of-crime:** URL for the source used to document the date of crime.

**date-of-first-death-sentence:** Date of the first death sentence received by the inmate. Note this is assumed to be the same as the date of conviction unless otherwise reported.

**source-date-of-first-conviction:** URL for the source used to document the date of first conviction.

**estimated-date-of-crime:** Dummy variable to indicate that the date of crime variable was estimated from a statement such as “earlier this year.” 0=not estimated, 1=estimated.

**estimated-date-of-first-death-sentence:** Dummy variable to indicate that the date of the first death sentence was estimated from a statement such as “earlier this year.” 0=not estimated, 1=estimated.