



The Death Penalty Information Center

2021 Year End Report Media Coverage

The Death Penalty Information Center's [2021 Year End Report](#) was released on December 16, 2021, and received extensive coverage in hundreds of print, online, television, and radio news outlets across the United States and around the world.

Coverage reflected the report and its accompanying press materials, including their most important theme: The long-term erosion of the death penalty continued in 2021, and the jurisdictions who used the punishment did so with apparent disregard for due process, judicial review of execution methods, or potentially meritorious claims of intellectual disability, incompetence to be executed, and innocence. Even though the pandemic played a role in reduced numbers of executions and new death sentences, coverage emphasized that the death penalty is still declining across the country. Virginia's historic role as the first southern state to abolish the death penalty — especially with its history of slavery, Jim Crow, and lynchings — was also highlighted.

An Associated Press article carried by hundreds of outlets across the U.S. used DPIC data to create an original graph that showed the decline of executions since 1972 — and emphasized the federal government's historically aberrant behavior in 2020 and the beginning of 2021.

Other outlets brought attention to the decline of the death penalty and how repeal bills are being pursued by both Democratic- and Republican-controlled legislatures. "What we've been seeing is a persistent slow erosion. It's an erosion that's occurring all over the country," DPIC Executive Director Robert Dunham told the Wall Street Journal. In an interview that ran on more than 80 public radio stations across the country as part of National Public Radio's (NPR) top-of-the-hour news, Robert said, "From a state perspective, the death penalty is disappearing one by one by one. That's happening in Democratic states, it's happening in Republican states."

A Washington Post article that quoted Robert numerous times highlighted jurisdictions where the death penalty was carried out despite serious failures and explained how those failures contribute to the public's continuing decline in support for the punishment. "It's this kind of extreme conduct," Robert told the newspaper, "that is having long-term effects on the public's view of the death penalty. Even if people support the death penalty in the abstract, they are losing faith in the ability to carry it out properly."

Many stories cited DPIC Deputy Director Ngozi Ndulue's quote from DPIC's press release accompanying the report: "We are seeing fewer and fewer executions, but those that do occur demonstrate that the death penalty is not reserved for the worst of the worst, but the most vulnerable of the vulnerable."

In addition to the NPR story, radio stories blanketed the nation with more than 20 CBS stations, more than three ABC stations, more than 30 Fox stations, and more than 20 iHeart Radio stations across the country carrying stories about the report.

A selection of notable coverage follows. Click on the headline to see the story.

* Indicates stories that included an interview with Executive Director Robert Dunham or Deputy Director Ngozi Ndulue

** Uses a statement from the DPIC press release accompanying the report

^ Story appears in multiple coverage sections

PRINT & ONLINE MEDIA COVERAGE

TOP TIER PRINT, NEWS SERVICES & ONLINE MEDIA (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Associated Press	Report: 11 executions in 2021 mark three-decade low	Dec. 16
<i>Uses DPIC data to create original graphs, and appeared in the Los Angeles Times, NBC News, Washington Post, Yahoo! News (the sixth most popular global news site as of 2019), and hundreds of other media outlets</i>		
Bloomberg Law	Executions Hit Three-Decade Low as Biden Pushes Federal Pause *	Dec. 16
The Hill	States, federal government carry out fewest executions since 1988	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by Yahoo! News</i>		
The Guardian	America's death penalty divide: why capital punishment is getting better, and worse **	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by Yahoo! News</i>		
NBC News	Graphics: Executions, death sentences declining across the U.S.	Dec. 16
<i>Uses DPIC data to create original graphs with guidance from Robert</i>		
Newsweek	How 'Extreme' States Are Preventing the End of the Death Penalty—Report **	Dec. 16
Newsweek	11 Americans on Death Row Were Executed in 2021	Dec. 27
National Public Radio	Interview with Cheryl Corley *^	Jan. 3
<i>Above interview ran on more than 80 public radio stations across the country as part of NPR's top-of-the-hour news</i>		
United Press International	Executions down in 2021, but still used for mentally ill, intellectually disabled *	Dec. 16
United Press International	House Democrats seek answers on federal executions from Justice Department *	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by Breitbart (conservative outlet)</i>		
USA Today	US executions, death sentences fall in 2021 to lowest levels in decades, report finds **	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried on Yahoo! News and numerous other outlets</i>		
U.S. News & World Report	U.S. Executes 11 People in 2021, Fewest in Decades.	Dec. 29
Wall Street Journal	Executions in 2021 Dropped to Lowest Level in Three Decades *	Dec. 16
Washington Post	Executions, death sentences in U.S. reach historic lows in 2021 *	Dec. 16
<i>Uses DPIC data to create original graphs</i>		

EDITORIALS AND OP-EDS (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Justia (The Verdict)	It Is Not Too Early to Prepare for Life After the Abolition of Capital Punishment *	Dec. 21
Missouri Times	Opinion: Death penalty in decline	Dec. 28
Orlando Sentinel	With 324 on death row, Florida is among small number of states still executing people Commentary *	Jan. 11
Slate	How 2021 Changed the Death Penalty **	Dec. 20
St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO)	Executions dwindle as public support falls. End this barbarism, already.	Dec. 21
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (PA)	It's time to abolish the death penalty	Dec. 23

LOCAL AND REGIONAL COVERAGE (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Al.com (AL)	Death penalty in decline: Alabama 1 of 5 states that carried out executions this year **	Dec. 16
<i>Links to DPIC's fact sheet. Al.com represents the Birmingham News, Huntsville Times, Mobile's Press-Register, Mississippi Press and gulflive.com</i>		
Black Wall Street Times (OK)	REPORT: OKLAHOMA IS SECOND-MOST ACTIVE DEATH PENALTY STATE [^]	Jan. 4
Corpus Christi Caller Times (TX)	Death penalty decline continues in Texas, but opponents say system still flawed **	Dec. 17
Carried by Yahoo! News		
Ohio Capital Journal	In 2021 the death penalty faded further in Ohio, U.S. **	Jan. 4
<i>Picked up by other news outlets in Ohio, including the Cleveland Scene, Ohio News Time, local TV stations, and WKYC</i>		
San Antonio Express News (TX)	Bexar among three counties to issue death sentences in '21, as use of death penalty at historic lows	Dec. 16

SPECIALTY COVERAGE (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
American Bar Association Journal	3 states accounted for most of this year's low number of executions and death sentences, new report says**	Dec. 16
Axios	Axios AM mention	Dec. 17
<i>Axios AM is a popular morning newsletter read by Washington, D.C. opinion leaders. It links to the full report.</i>		
Black Wall Street Times	REPORT: OKLAHOMA IS SECOND-MOST ACTIVE DEATH PENALTY STATE^	Jan. 4
Catholic News Service	In wide swaths of U.S., death sentences, executions are no longer imposed*	Dec. 17
<i>Above story carried by the National Catholic Reporter, Crux, and the Record at the Archdiocese of Louisville, Union of Catholic Asian News</i>		
Courthouse News Service	US capital punishment continued to decline this year, report finds*	Dec. 16
The Crime Report	Capital Punishment's Victims Now 'the Most Vulnerable of the Vulnerable': Report*	Dec. 16
Davis Vanguard	Despite Record Federal Executions During Presidential Transition, 2021 Death Penalty Report Notes Fewer Overall Executions	Dec. 20
LexBlog	DPIC releases year-end report emphasizing "continuing decline of death penalty" in 2021*	Dec. 16
Marshall Project	Opening Statement	Dec. 17
Reason	The Death Penalty Continued Its Downward Trend in 2021	Jan. 3
<i>Above story carried by the Capitol Hill Times</i>		
Wonkette	Seems America Has Just About Had Enough Of The Death Penalty.	Dec. 17

INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Consultor Jurídico (Brazil)	Pena de morte atinge seu nível mais baixo nos EUA em 2021 (Death penalty hits lowest level in US in 2021)	Dec. 20
De Volksrant (Netherlands)	Een terdoodveroordeelde die een kwartier lang ligt te stuip trekken strookt niet met de illusie van de humane executie (A death row inmate convulsed for 15 minutes does not match the illusion of humane execution)	Dec. 22
Hindustan News Hub (India)	This Year Saw Historically Low Numbers of Executions and Death Sentences	Dec. 29
La Stampa (India)	Meno pene di morte negli USA, ma continuano crudeltà ed errori	Dec. 16
HeadTopics (Spain)	Pena de muerte: las cinco maneras de ejecutar a un preso que aún siguen vigentes en el mundo (Death penalty: the five ways to execute a prisoner that are still valid in the world)	Dec. 21

TELEVISION AND RADIO

NATIONAL TELEVISION & RADIO OUTLETS (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
ABC Radio News	ABC Radio News	Dec. 16
Above clip ran on more than 3 ABC radio stations in Los Angeles, Portland, and San Francisco		
Black News Channel	Black News Tonight	Dec. 16
CBS Radio News	CBS Radio News	Dec. 16
Above clip ran on more than 20 CBS radio stations across the country		
Fox Radio News	Fox Radio News	Dec. 16
Above clip ran on more than 30 Fox radio stations across the country		
iHeart Radio News	iHeart Radio News	Dec. 16
Above script was read by anchors on more than 20 iHeart Radio stations across the country		
National Public Radio	Interview with Cheryl Corley *^	Jan. 3
Above interview ran on more than 80 public radio stations across the country as part of NPR's top-of-the-hour news		