

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/do-white-lives-matter-more-ohio-executions>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

[Skip to main content](#)

There are plenty of powerful arguments against the use of the death penalty. The frequency of [wrongful convictions](#), the massive financial burden on states, and the moral qualms against [government-sanctioned murder](#) are a few of the most common. A [study released earlier this year](#) by Frank Baumgartner of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill illustrates another very good reason for abolishing the death penalty: racial, gender, and location bias.

National studies have previously noted the disparities in executions related to the [race of the accused and their victims](#). Baumgartners study specifically analyzes Ohios executions over the last forty years, and the results speak for themselves. The two most impactful and troubling conclusions are:

Location, Location, Location: Some Counties Like to Execute, Others Dont

Baumgartners study notably compared the execution rates by county, and found extreme variation in execution rates. For example:

The three most populous counties (Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton) have very different execution rates, even though their homicide rates are relatively similar. Hamilton has the highest execution rate at .60 executions per 100 homicides: this is more than double the execution rate in Cuyahoga, and nearly nine times the rate in Franklin County.

Regardless of ones views of the death penalty, can Ohioans really justify and support such arbitrary enforcement? Being put to death should not be determined by zip code.

Ohios three most populous counties (Cuyahoga, Franklin, and Hamilton) have very different execution rates, even though their homicide rates are relatively similar. The execution rate in Hamilton county is more than double the execution rate in Cuyahoga, and nearly nine times the rate in Franklin County.

And speaking of arbitrary

Justice Reserved for White Females

Baumgartners study found that the likelihood that the crime will result in an execution when the victim is a white female is 1.55%, compared to .25% when the victim is a black male. That means that someone convicted of homicide against a white female is **six times** more likely to be executed than someone convicted of homicide against a black male.

One must ask: if the theory behind the use of the death penalty is *justice*, then what does this statistic say about justice in Ohio? The evidence points to a system that is far from colorblind.

The state of Ohio has demonstrated through its inconsistent use of the death penalty that in the eyes of the justice system white lives matter more. The criminal justice system continues to reinforce the idea that white women are more virtuous, pure, and in need of protection, [justifying formal and informal racial biases](#).

As a white female, I sleep no more soundly at night knowing that my home state has chosen to protect me through this barbaric and arbitrary system of punishment. I get no peace of mind from knowing that the government is more likely to kill on my behalf.

In the name of fairness, justice, logic, and compassion, it is time for Ohio to abolish the death penalty.

Stay informed

2022 ACLU of Ohio