

# DNA Exonerations

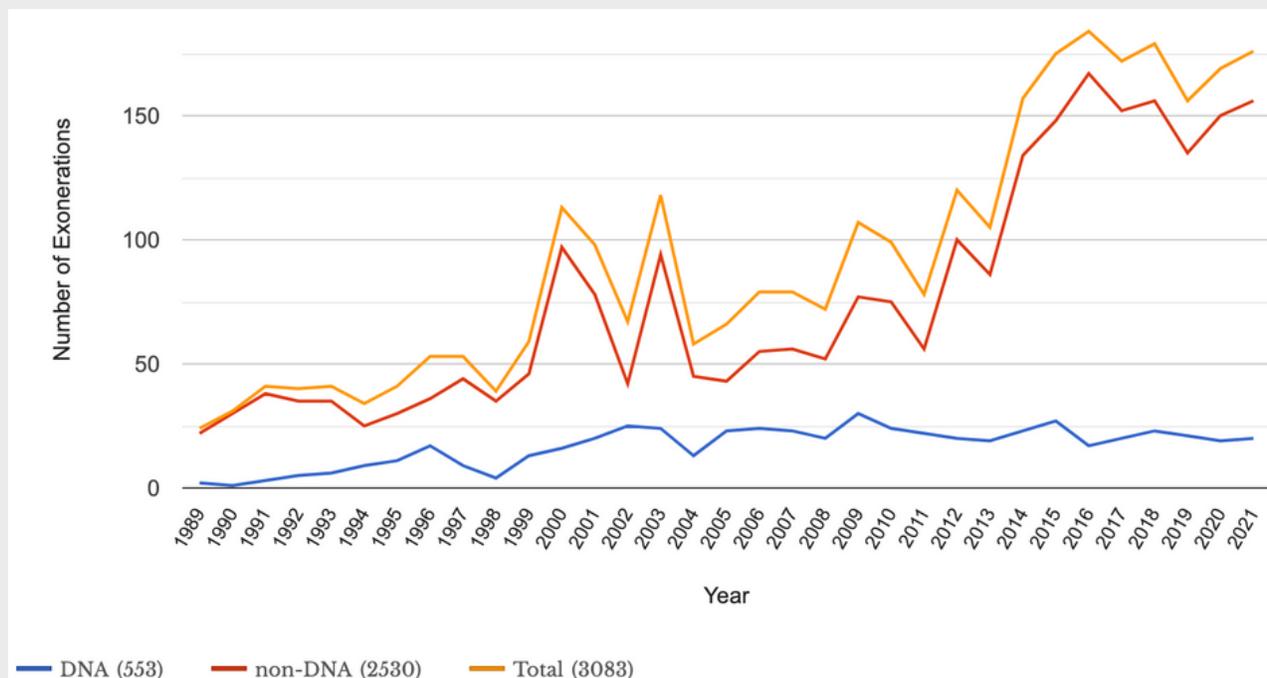
Why exonerations of the falsely accused are reaching historic levels?

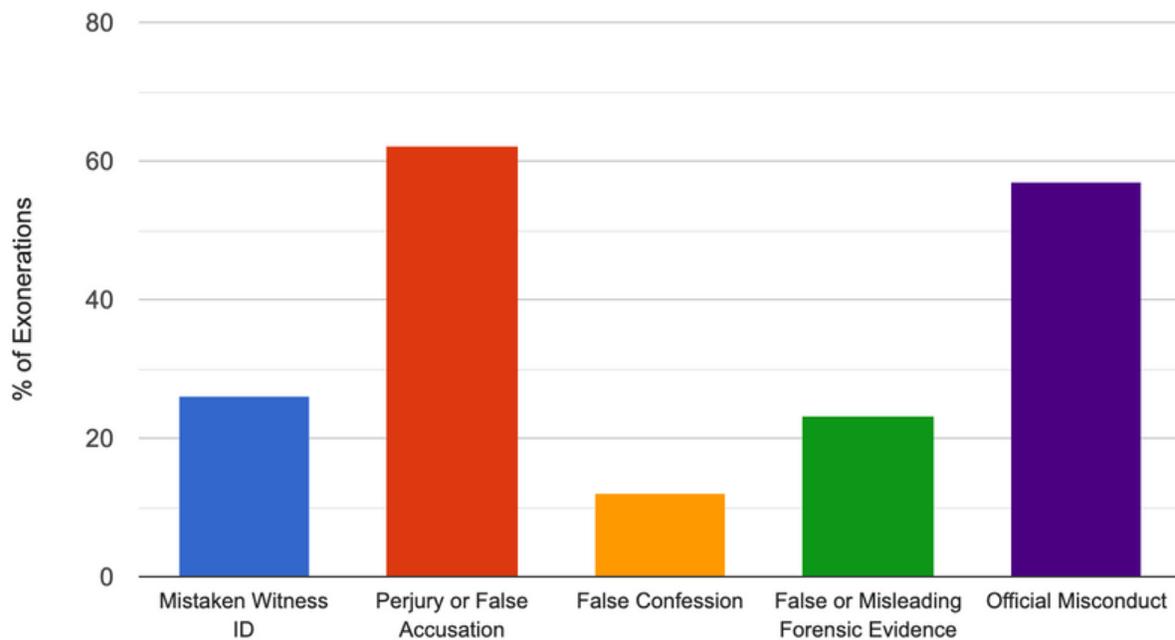
**By Jonathan Sichka**

DNA has only been advancing throughout the years. Yet there is a record high of exonerations in the United States, and we can't fix it fast enough.

As time has passed, DNA short for deoxyribonucleic acid testing has advanced over time. However, exonerations are only rising as time passes meaning false convictions are also at an all-time high. Why...

As seen below in the graph, from the year 1990 to last year 2021 exonerations has exponentially increased. Which only means that there are more and more false convictions every year. What's happening, we claim to be so modern yet so many mistakes are happening... Or can we even call these mistakes!





## Contributing Factors

We've seen how the number of false convictions has increased over years. Now let's look at why false convictions are increasing and what are the contributing factors?

The contributing factors are mistaken witness ID, perjury or false accusation, false confession, false or misleading forensic evidence, and/or official misconduct as stated by The National Registry of Exonerations, updated November 30, 2022.

Exonerations have skyrocketed because of the growing trend of accountability in prosecutorial offices around the country such as "Cook County, Dallas County, Kings County." These counties have adopted second-look procedures and special review units that are tasked with looking into questionable convictions.

As seen in the graph shown above, perjury and/or false accusations and official misconduct are the two main contributing factors towards exonerations.

There are multiple reasons to why exonerations of the falsely accused are at an all-time high. One major reason is the lack of accountability for government officials on all levels such as police officers, judges, prosecutors, etc. There have been multiple cases where individuals were exonerated based on official misconduct.



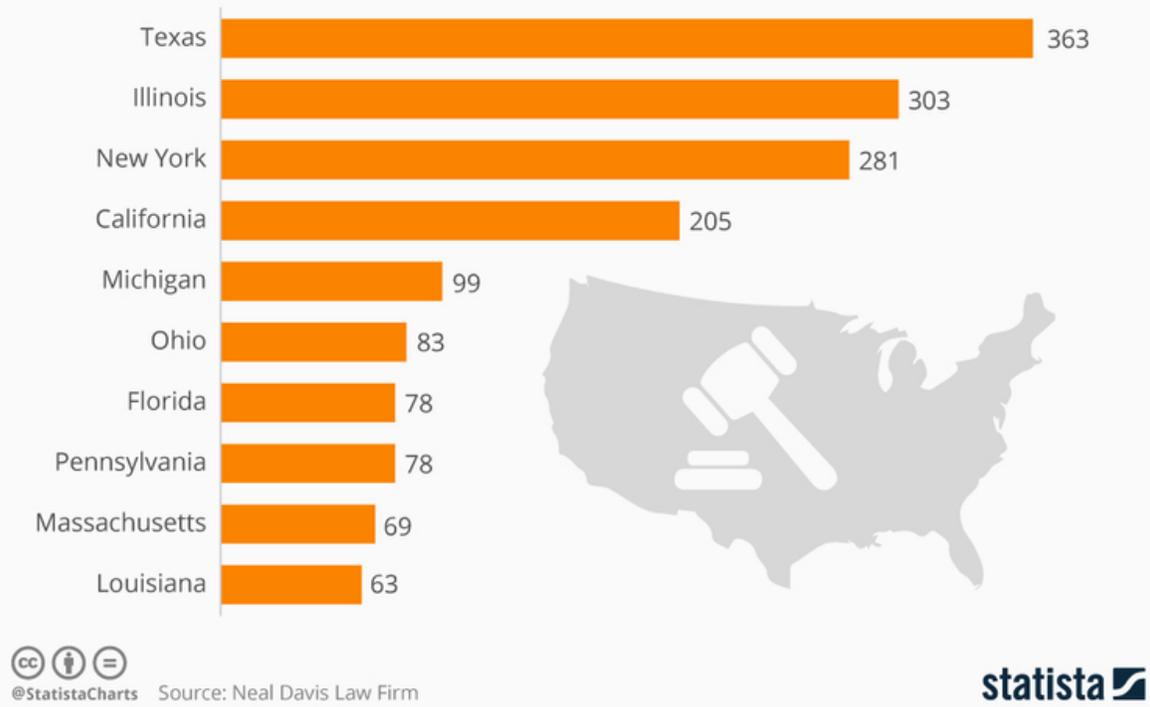
## Herman Williams Case

Herman Williams an innocent man who was sentenced to prison for allegedly murdering his ex-wife was released September 6, 2022. Herman was released after spending nearly 29 years in prison for something he did not do! This was all due to official misconduct. A detective who was assigned to the case did not have any integrity. "The Lake County State's Attorney's Office acknowledged that his 1994 conviction was based on scientifically unsupported forensic pathology testimony regarding the victim's time of death, that the prosecution hid favorable evidence at his original trial, and that the detective who claimed Mr. Williams confessed is now known to have engaged in a pattern of misconduct, including securing false confessions and claiming suspects made admissions of guilt in other innocence cases."

As stated by the Innocence Project staff published September 6, 2022. In addition, the article states that the Herman Williams case "was riddled with misconduct by both law enforcement and the prosecution." The National Registry of Exonerations states that "the role of government misconduct in the nation's first 2,400 exoneration cases found that police officers committed misconduct in 35% of cases." To add on, "Fabrication of evidence, which occurred in this case, was among the most common forms of police misconduct. In that same study, prosecutors were found to have committed misconduct in 30% of cases and concealment of exculpatory evidence was found to be a common type of prosecutorial misconduct and was also present in this case." As if this was not enough, when first being interrogated Herman was held in a room for 13 hours. As stated earlier, government officials are not held accountable and need more supervision!

## The U.S. States With The Most Exonerations

Number of exonerations for wrongful convictions since 1989



## Wrapping Up

After looking at the Herman William's case, statistics about exonerations, and the contributing factors we now know why exonerations are at an all-time high. There are many factors however, the most important ones that we discussed today are government misconduct and false confession. In the Herman William's case because of the detective's misconduct Williams was forced towards a false confession. Exonerations are at an all-time high because law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges are lacking accountability. DNA advancements do help with exonerating innocent individuals however, having accountability towards law enforcement will decrease false convictions.

# Bibliography

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